

Google agrees to delete WiFi data collected in Hong Kong

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The camera of a street-view car, used to photograph whole streets for Google maps. Google has agreed to delete all personal WiFi data gathered by its "Street View" mapping service in Hong Kong, in what the city's privacy commissioner said was a first.

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The Internet giant is being investigated in a number of countries after the cars, which drive around taking photos for Google's free online mapping service, mistakenly picked up the private information.

After carrying out a compliance check, Hong Kong Privacy Commissioner Roderick Woo said Friday he had requested that [Google](#) completely erase all WiFi data collected in the city and provide third-party verification it had done so.

Woo said his check showed the data collected by Google contained mostly fragmented email messages, Facebook "Wall" postings and the like but did not contain sensitive personal data, passwords or whole emails and could not directly identify any one individual.

The Mountain View, California-based company had given an undertaking to delete the information and that its Street View cars would not collect WiFi data when they returned to the streets of Hong Kong, he said.

"This incident has aroused global privacy concern and many overseas data protection authorities have looked into similar incidents in their own jurisdictions," Woo said in a statement on the commission's website (www.pcpd.org.hk/).

"To date, Hong Kong was the only privacy regulator which had successfully procured an undertaking and an affidavit from Google," he said.

Woo said he had decided not to carry out a formal investigation as the data could not be used to directly identify any one individual and Google had not intended to compile personal information through its Street View operation.

The Internet search and advertising titan grounded all Street View cars in May after disclosing that they had mistakenly gathered snippets of [private data](#).

They returned to the road in July in several countries but only after all wireless scanning equipment had been removed.

According to Google, Street View cars taking photographs of cities in more than 30 countries inadvertently gathered fragments of personal information.

[Street View](#), which was launched in 2006, lets users view panoramic street scenes on Google Maps and take a virtual "walk" through cities such as New York, Paris or Hong Kong.

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