

Washington State to Share \$7 Million in Google Settlement

Local News

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OLYMPIA-- Attorney General Bob Ferguson today joined 37 other states and the District of Columbia in a [\\$7 million settlement](#) with search engine giant Google for collecting data from unsecured wireless networks nationwide while taking photographs for its Street View service. Washington will receive \$135,604.

From 2008 through May 2010, Google equipped its Street View cars with antennae and open-source software that it admitted was collecting network identification information to use for future geolocation services. Google also collected and stored other information that was transmitted over those unsecured business and personal wireless networks.

Google claimed it was unaware the company was collecting the data, but signed the assurance of voluntary compliance (AVC) acknowledging information it gathered may have included the internet addresses—or URLs—of requested Web pages, partial or complete e-mail messages and other confidential or private information being transmitted to or from the network user while the Street View vehicles were travelling through neighborhoods.

“This is a prime example of the power of the state Attorneys General to band together and hold powerful companies accountable,” Ferguson said. “This settlement brings a contentious case to fair resolution, recognizing the privacy rights of those individuals whose information was collected without their permission.”

No longer collecting information

Google has disabled or removed the equipment and software used to collect the information from its Street View vehicles, and has agreed not to collect any additional information without notice and consent.

Information collected identified, scheduled for destruction

The information collected has been segregated and secured—and, under the terms of the agreement, will be destroyed as soon as legally practicable.

Was not, will not, be used

Google confirmed the information was not used, and will not be used, in any product or service, and that the information collected in the U.S. was not disclosed to any third party.

Employee training

Other key elements of the agreement require Google to run an employee training program about privacy and confidentiality of user data and continue the program for at least 10 years.

Consumer education

It must also conduct a public service advertising campaign to educate consumers about steps they

may take to better secure their personal information while using wireless networks.

Payment to states

Google agreed to pay the 38 states and the District of Columbia a total of \$7 million to be used for, among other things, civil penalties, attorneys' fees and other costs of investigation and litigation, future consumer protection enforcement and education, or for other uses permitted by state law, at the sole discretion of each Attorney General. Washington will receive \$135,604.

The Attorneys General of Connecticut, Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri and Texas served on the executive committee of this settlement. Assistant Attorney General Paula Selis of the Washington Attorney General's Office assisted with this case.

Other states participating in the settlement are: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia.