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# Firms Agree to AG's App Privacy Rules

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SACRAMENTO, Calif., Feb. 22 (LID) – California Attorney General Kamala Harris (D) announced Wednesday that her office has reached an agreement with technology companies aimed at strengthening privacy protections for Smartphone owners.

The agreement between the state Department of Justice and Amazon.com, Apple, Google, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and Research in Motion calls for the companies to ask mobile applications developers to include privacy policies in their apps.

This way, Harris said, users may determine what phone data apps will access and what will be done with the information. After all, she added, app developers, advertising networks and analytic services may have access to sensitive user information, including their physical location, contacts, text messages and photos.

“This agreement strengthens the privacy protections of California consumers and of millions of people around the globe who use mobile apps,” Harris said. “By ensuring that mobile apps have privacy policies, we create more transparency and give mobile users more informed control over who accesses their personal information and how it is used.”

The global agreement is aimed at ensuring that \$6.8 billion a year mobile app market is in compliance with the California Online Privacy Protection Act.

The 2003 law, codified at CAL. BPC. CODE § 2257, requires commercial web sites and online services that collect personally-identifiable information about users to conspicuously post their privacy policy.

Only about 5 percent of mobile apps offer a privacy policy, according to the Department of Justice.

Developers that don't comply with their stated privacy policies can be prosecuted by the attorney general under California consumer protection statutes, including the Unfair Competition Law (UCL; CAL. BPC. CODE § 17200 et seq.) and the California False Advertising Law (CAL. BPC. CODE § 17500 et seq.)

The attorney general's announcement comes on the heels of a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) staff report, *Mobile Apps for Kids: Current Privacy Disclosures are Disappointing*, found that neither mobile application developers nor app stores provide parents with information they need to determine what data is being collected from their children, how it is being shared or who will have access to the information.

The FTC report, *Mobile Apps for Kids: Current Privacy Disclosures are Disappointing*, is available at [http://www.ftc.gov/os/2012/02/120216mobile\\_apps\\_kids.pdf](http://www.ftc.gov/os/2012/02/120216mobile_apps_kids.pdf).

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Harris