

Potential for Hacking into Cars Puts Drivers at Risk, Senator Says

Today's technology-advanced cars are vulnerable to hacking, which can result in the theft of personal driving information and control of the vehicle taken over by hackers, a new report issued by Sen. Ed Markey's office finds.

The report, "Tracking & Hacking: Security & Privacy Gaps Put American Drivers at Risk," notes its findings "reveal that there is a clear lack of appropriate security measures to protect drivers against hackers who may be able to take control of a vehicle or against those who may wish to collect and use personal driver information."

The findings are based on responses by 16 major car manufacturers to questions submitted by the Senator's staff. Among the major findings from those responses:

- Nearly 100 percent of cars on the market include wireless technologies that could pose vulnerabilities to hacking or privacy intrusions.
- Most car manufacturers were unaware of or unable to report on past hacking incidents.
- Security measures to prevent remote access to vehicle electronics are inconsistent and haphazard across all car manufacturers, and many manufacturers did not seem to understand the questions posed.
- Only two manufacturers were able to describe any capabilities to diagnose or meaningfully respond to any infiltration in real time.
- Car manufacturers collect large amounts of data on driving history and vehicle performance but did not describe effective means to secure the data.

"The alarmingly inconsistent and incomplete state of industry security and privacy practices, along with the voluntary principles put forward by industry, raises a need for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in consultation with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) on privacy issues, to promulgate new standards that will protect the data, security and privacy of drivers in the modern age of increasingly connected vehicles," the report said.

The findings in the report are similar to issues raised by Balough Law Offices beginning in 2013 in a presentation to the Cyberspace Law Committee of the American Bar Association and an article in the ABA's Business Law Today November 2013 issue, "Cyberterrorism on Wheels: Are Today's Cars Vulnerable to Attack?"

Balough Law Offices, LLC, is a Chicago-based law firm which focuses on cyberspace, business, and intellectual property law. Our homepage is balough.com.