

Check Your Online Subscriptions Regularly for Fraudulent Charges

November 16, 2025 - Nearly 2/3s of Americans have at least one paid online subscription. The most popular of these are paid video streaming services. But others worth mentioning include music streaming, software subscriptions, scheduled monthly deliveries, cloud storage, etc... And if you subscribe to any of these services, there is a pretty good chance that at least one of those subscriptions is from Google. Whether it is YouTube TV, cloud storage or software/apps (from the Play Store), Google has a large subscriber base.

Recently, I had an experience with them that was both unexpected and unpleasant. Specifically, I found out that I was being billed for services that I never ordered and which they refused to refund. Here's what happened.

I subscribe to a couple of services from Google, including YouTube TV and cloud storage. This past week, I received a message from Google saying that my backup payment method had changed. And immediately after that, I received a message thanking me for a new subscription. But I hadn't changed my payment method, and I hadn't subscribed to any new services recently.

When I logged into my Google account and looked at my subscriptions, I found out that I hadn't just been subscribed to one service. There were two, both from the Play Store. One was a subscription to a weather application. The other was for an app that tracks local crime. I was able to cancel the weather subscription but, while I hadn't seen a bill from the crime app yet, it had already billed my credit card. I canceled that one too and then asked for a refund. But Google denied the refund without any explanation, and no appeal process.

I haven't reported the incident to my credit card company yet, but I will. More importantly, I immediately changed my password.

Frankly, a breach of my account like this frightens me a little. There are a lot of things that can be charged on Google that are a lot more expensive than a \$5.99 per month subscription. Fortunately, I tend to be scam-aware. I suspect that whoever made these charges was trying to see if I monitor my account, and that more charges would have shown up if I didn't lock them out of the account.

The bottom line here is that if you subscribe to services online, you need to be checking your accounts regularly. And if you receive any messages about account changes, don't click on the links in those messages, but do not ignore the messages either. Doing so could prove to be very expensive.

by Jim Malmberg

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