

Massachusetts Illegally Installed Tracking Software on Cell Phones During COVID Lockdowns

November 22, 2022 - The State of Massachusetts, in partnership with Google, was installing contact tracing software on Android cell phones during the COVID pandemic. The installations were done without the phone users' permission and without their knowledge. That's what's alleged in a law suit against Google and the state's Department of Public Health (DPH) that was filed in federal court earlier this month.

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(function() {  
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
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s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
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(function() {  
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;  
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';  
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);  
})();
```

According to the suit, in early 2021 the state asked residents to install contact tracing software on their phones. The software tracked the movements of those users and would alert the state when they came in contact with anyone who had been diagnosed with COVID. At least, that was the plan.

Unsurprisingly, most people don't want to have all of their movements tracked. Because of this, very few people in the state volunteered to install the software. To overcome this, the suit claims that Google and DPH colluded to install the software automatically on phones that were operated within the state. The only way for users to know that they were being tracked was to go into their phone's settings and to look at installed applications. And even then, they couldn't do much about it. If they attempted to uninstall the application, Google would immediately reinstall it.

Because Massachusetts is a small state, many of the people who work their actually live in surrounding states. Those people were also forced into having this tracking spyware installed on their phones as soon as they crossed the state line.

The lawsuit alleges that DPH violated both the US Constitution and the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. It was filed by the New Civil Liberties Alliance (NCLA) on November 14th. The software installation is believed to have impacted more than one million people who live or work in the state.

by Jim Malmberg

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