

FTC: Amazon/Ring workers illegally spied on users of home security cameras

Amazon agrees to Ring and Alexa settlements but didn't admit violating any laws.

A Federal Trade Commission lawsuit filed yesterday accused Ring, the home security camera company owned by Amazon, of invading users' privacy by "allowing thousands of employees and contractors to watch video recordings of customers' private spaces."

Until September 2017, every employee of Ring and a Ukraine-based contractor had access to customer videos, which were stored without encryption, the FTC said. "Ring gave every employee—as well as hundreds of Ukraine-based third-party contractors—full access to every customer video, regardless of whether the employee or contractor actually needed that access to perform his or her job function," the FTC said.

Violations did not stop in 2017 despite new access controls, according to the lawsuit, which alleges privacy invasions both before and after Amazon bought Ring in 2018. The FTC's lawsuit in US District Court for the District of Columbia also alleged that Ring failed to promptly implement basic privacy and security protections, making it easier for hackers to take over customers' accounts and cameras. A settlement that is pending a judge's approval would require Ring to pay \$5.8 million for customer refunds, delete certain types of data, and implement privacy and security controls. Amazon did not admit any wrongdoing.

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