

TECH TIP – IS YOUR FLASHLIGHT APP SPYING ON YOU? BY: SUE DETERS

Rumor has it that the Flashlight app on your Android phone could be spying on you. Unfortunately, there may be some truth to that rumor. In December of 2013 the FTC filed a complaint against the makers of “Brightest Flashlight” for failure to disclose that their app would report the geolocation of your device and share the information with other vendors for advertising purposes. Recently, a report released by the company SnoopWall outlined the top 10 Flashlight apps and how they may be collecting your data and sending it to organizations outside of the US.

Most Cybersecurity firms agree that the threats against Flashlight apps are not any riskier than any other app that you install on your phone. The consensus among security firms is that your phone should be treated like any other computing device and caution should be used when downloading to them.

Steps can be taken to protect your phone:

- Install the app from a trusted source such as Google Play
- Read the permission documentation carefully when installing apps
- Check your current permissions, review which apps are requesting location information
- Disable your GPS at all times except when you are using it
- Disable your Bluetooth except when needed
- Considering installing a malware app to monitor your phone

Keep in mind, just because you have a Flashlight installed, it doesn't mean that your information is being shared. And for those of you that own iPhones, the preinstalled Flashlight app is considered safe.