

Kentucky's Attorney General Jack Conway joined 37 other states and the District of Columbia on Tuesday in announcing a \$7 million settlement with Google over privacy concerns involving the capture of consumers' and businesses' private WiFi data by its Street View service by using specially equipped vehicles to capture images between 2008 and 2010 for use in Google's future geolocation services.

In addition to collecting images, Google Street View cars also collected network identification information from all private and public wireless networks for use in Google's future geolocation services. While Google represented that its executives were unaware the payload data was being collected, the Assurance of Voluntary Compliance it signed with the states acknowledged that the information may have included URLs of requested Web pages, partial or complete email communications, and any confidential or private information being transmitted to or from the network user while the Street View cars were driving by.

Google has since disabled or removed the equipment and software used to collect the payload data from its Street View vehicles, and agreed not to collect any additional information without notice to consumers and their consent. Google has also segregated and secured the payload data that was collected, and under the terms of the agreement will destroy that data as soon as legally practicable. Further, Google agreed that it has not and will not use the payload data in any product or service, and that the information collected in the United States was not disclosed to a third party.

Wireless Internet access is convenient, but consumers should use a password to secure their location to prevent access by unauthorized individuals. Manufacturers may deliver wireless routers with the password feature turned off, but the instructions should explain how to set up the router securely.