



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Messaging Service Promises to Make Data Privacy Rules Clearer

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The messaging service WhatsApp is going to make details about its privacy rules clearer.

The move comes after officials in Ireland gave the service a record fine for breaking European Union data privacy rules.

The new policy will start on Monday. WhatsApp's privacy policy will be organized in a way that provides more information on the data it collects and how it is used. The company said it is also explaining in more detail how it protects international data for its **global** service and the legal reasons for processing the data.

WhatsApp is owned by Facebook, now named Meta Platforms. With the **update**, users in Europe will see a notice at the top of their **chat** list that will take them to the new information.

WhatsApp is taking the action after getting a record \$267 million fine in September from Ireland's data privacy officials. The fine is for breaking European Union data protection rules on openness about sharing people's information with other Facebook companies.

The chat service said it disagreed with the decision. But it must update its rules while it appeals the decision. The update does not affect how data is processed. Users will not have to agree to anything new or take any other action.

Ireland's Data Privacy Commission is the top privacy **authority** for WhatsApp under European Union rules because WhatsApp's headquarters is in Dublin.

WhatsApp was involved in a separate privacy dispute earlier this year. A different update to its privacy policy raised concerns that users were being forced to agree to share more of their data with Facebook. That update led some users to move to other services like Telegram and Signal. It also led to an investigation by Turkey's competition authorities, a temporary German ban on data gathering, and action by other EU agencies.

A six-hour outage of Facebook services in October showed how important WhatsApp has become for its more than 2 billion users worldwide.

I'm John Russell.

John Russell adapted this story from an Associated Press report. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

global -*adj.* involving the whole world

update - *n.* a change or addition to computer software that includes the most recent information

chat - *n.* a talk held over the Internet or text message

authority -*n.* : the power to give orders or make decisions; the power or right to direct or control someone or something