



This Innocent App is Tracking You WEATHER You Like It or Not

AXEL Follow
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This app tracks your every move. It knows where you are and where you're going. Even when this app is in the background it's tracking you all the way. This app is a mini-spy in your pocket.

Worse yet, this app sends this information to a data monetization firm.

You know, the kind of firm that tries to gather data on you in order to turn around and sell to you...or to sell that information to other companies to sell to you.

It's all very shady, borderline illegal, a massive breach of privacy, and...not from an app that you would expect.

Whenever the topic of spying apps come up, the usual suspects pop into our minds: Facebook, Amazon, Evernote, every cloud company, and even Disney. But this app we're talking about isn't any of these.

This app that's tracking your every move: AccuWeather.

Yes, that innocent weather app that you wouldn't think twice about is responsible for tracking your moves. Collecting that data. Giving it away.

Weathering the data storm

AccuWeather comes with a location feature that it says is used to give you up-to-date weather information for your location. According to the app itself this feature can be used to *“alert you to severe weather in your area, provide critical updates...and much more.”*

It's the “much more” that people need to worry about. The AccuWeather app is not just using your location data to give you weather updates, it's also collecting that data and giving to a company called RevealMobile.

On their own website RevealMobile states: *“We help app publishers and media companies extract the maximum value from their location data”*. As well as *“We help them use location to serve location-based content and create highly targeted audience segments.”*

In other words your location information is used against you.

Doesn't seem like you can trust any app nowadays. At least not if you're someone who values their privacy. Unfortunately, for users of the AccuWeather app, the tracking/reporting isn't even the worst part of the story.

Cloudy with a chance of spying

Like most apps, AccuWeather comes with the ability to turn off the location sharing setting. Unlike most apps, AccuWeather still goes ahead and tracks your location anyway.



Even with the location setting turned off, and even with the app only running in the background, AccuWeather still tracks the Wi-Fi router name and MAC address of the device and sends it to RevealMobile every few hours. This information is enough to get the precise location of the device.

Super shady.

So even when you think you're in control, you really aren't. And that's a major aspect of the issue here. Users are under the impression that when they choose a setting (such as no location tracking) that the company will honor it.

Not to say nothing about giving that information away in the first place. But that seems to be the nature of the app world today.

AccuWeather, AccuSpying

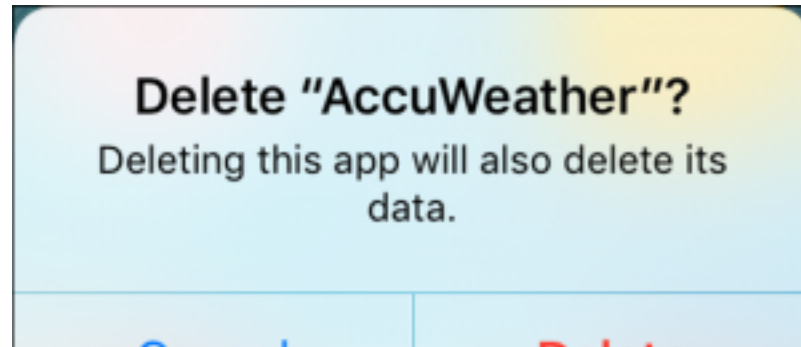
For those of us who consider the privacy of our data to be important, this is yet another frustrating (but all too common) revelation.

AccuWeather is definitely straddling the line of legality on this one, and it bears watching whether they are able to get away with it or if the Federal Trade Commission comes down on them for it.

There is precedence for the FTC fining a company for deceptive location tracking practices and there is no doubt that AccuWeather will have to defend itself for these practices.

In the meantime, many are already deleting the AccuWeather app from their phones. If you're someone that values your privacy, or values the right to fully opt out of tracking, then it would be recommended that you also delete the app.

Frankly, with all the weather apps out there, there's no reason to keep AccuWeather around.



Ultimately, more than any action from the FTC, this is what will get the attention of AccuWeather and any other company that is doing (or thinking of doing) similar practices.

Until these app developers realize that the public cares about their privacy and want their data to be respected, they will continue pushing the line of data mining.

As app users it's important to be vigilant about what our apps are actually doing and then take action when it starts crossing any lines. As AccuWeather's usership dwindles they will be hard pressed to handle the storm they created by being frivolous with our data.

And that can only mean sunnier days ahead for privacy advocates.

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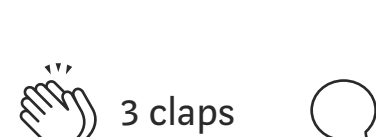
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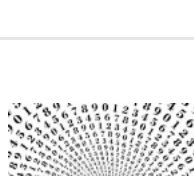
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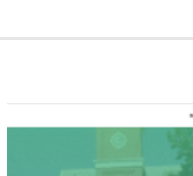
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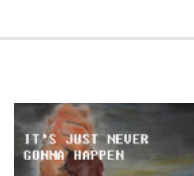
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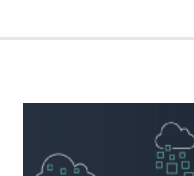
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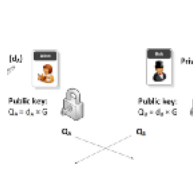
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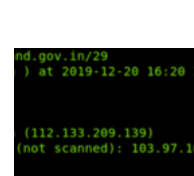
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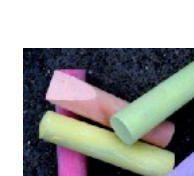
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