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Update Gone Wrong Leaves 500 Smart Locks Inoperable

- Fatal error leaves customers scrambling for fixes that can take a week or longer.

- Hundreds of Internet-connected locks became inoperable last week after a faulty software update caused them to experience a fatal system error, manufacturer LockState said.

- The incident is the latest reminder that the so-called Internet of Things—in which locks, thermostats, and other everyday appliances are embedded with small Internet-connected computers—often provide as many annoyances as they do conveniences. Over the past week, the Colorado-based company's Twitter feed has been gorged with comments from customers who were suddenly unable to lock or unlock their doors normally. Complicating the matter: the affected LockState model—the RemoteLock 6i—is included in an Airbnb partnership called Host Assist. That left many hosts unable to remotely control their locks.

- The failure occurred last Monday when LockState mistakenly sent some 6i lock models a firmware update developed for 7i locks. The update left earlier 6i models unable to be locked and no longer able to receive over-the-air updates. LockState Marketing Manager John Cargile told Ars that the failure hit about 500 locks. The company is offering affected customers one of two options: (1) return the back

portion of the lock to LockState so the firmware can be updated, with a turnaround time of about five to seven days, or (2) request a replacement interior lock, with a turnaround time of about 14 to 18 days. In the meantime, customers can use a physical key to unlock doors. (Like most hotel rooms, the doors automatically lock each time they're closed.)