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Vizio Smart TVs Spied on Millions of Users Without Their Consent

American company Vizio has decided to settle charges that it installed software on its smart TVs that collected viewing data of some 11 million users without their knowledge or consent.

To that end, the company will pay \$2.2 million to the Federal Trade Commission and the Office of the New Jersey Attorney General.

According to the complaint lodged by the agencies, Vizio's smart TVs captured "information about video displayed on the smart TV, including video from consumer cable, broadband, set-top box, DVD, over-the-air broadcasts, and streaming devices" since February 2014.

The capturing was effected through automated content recognition software that was either originally installed on newer or later pushed to older TVs through a firmware update.

"Vizio then turned that mountain of data into cash by selling consumers' viewing histories to advertisers and others," FTC's Lesley Fair explained. Vizio hid this tracking functionality behind the benignly named "Smart Interactivity" feature. The feature supposedly enables program offers and suggestions, but does not mention that it also collects consumers' viewing data.

Consumers who bought a Vizio smart TV in the last few years are advised to think about whether they still want to share their viewing data with the company, and to disable data collection (go to *Menu > Settings > Smart Interactivity*) if they decide they don't want to.