



Issued 9/7/18

Google Cracks Down on Dodgy Tech Support Ads

Tech support scams come via either cold calls to unsuspecting users or bogus web pages showing made-up, fake alert messages usually about dummy virus infections. Cold-callers posing as techies from Microsoft attempt to trick targets into thinking they have a problem with their PC. In response, Google has introduced restrictions on ads in the tech support category worldwide ahead of the rollout of a verification program, as explained in a blog post by David Graff, Google's director of global product policy. "We've seen a rise in misleading ad experiences stemming from third-party technical support providers and have decided to begin restricting ads in this category globally. For many years, we've consulted and worked with law enforcement and government agencies to address abuse in this area. As the fraudulent activity takes place off our platform, it's increasingly difficult to separate the bad actors from the legitimate providers. That's why in the coming months, we will roll out a verification program to ensure that only legitimate providers of third-party tech support can use our platform to reach consumers." These efforts alone won't stop all bad actors trying to game our advertising systems, but it will make it a lot harder. Google said that last year it took down more than 3.2 billion ads that violated its advertising policies. It has banned ads for payday loans and bail bonds services — and developed advanced verification programs to fight fraud in areas like local locksmith services and addiction treatment centers. In 2017, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Centre received approximately 11,000 complaints related to tech support fraud. The claimed losses amounted to nearly \$15m, which represented an 86 per cent increase from 2016.