

"OK, Google. Send a Letter to the CPSC.": Privacy Groups Request Recall of Google Home Mini

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Last Friday, ten consumer and privacy advocacy groups, including the Electronic Privacy Information Center, Center for Digital Democracy, and Consumer Watchdog, sent a [letter](#) to Acting Chairman Ann Marie Buerkle, requesting that the CPSC recall the Google Home Mini smart speaker. The speaker was designed to respond to the voice commands, "OK, Google" and "Hey, Google," as well as to a consumer pressing a small button on the top of the unit. Last week, the blog Android Police reported a glitch that caused the device to detect a touch even when a consumer was not pressing the button and remain "always on." In response, Google issued a software update and completely disabled the button functionality.

The groups claim that this glitch resulted in Google intercepting and recording private conversations without consumers' knowledge or consent, and that the device therefore poses a risk to consumer safety. Although they acknowledge that "the privacy concerns associated with Internet-connected devices appear different from traditional public safety concerns," the groups call on the CPSC and its "broad mandate" to respond to such concerns, particularly in light of the "failure" of the FTC to investigate complaints involving Internet-connected devices.

Under the Consumer Product Safety Act, manufacturers, importers, distributors, and retailers have an obligation to immediately report to the CPSC when they obtain information that reasonably supports the conclusion that a consumer product contains a defect that could create a substantial product hazard, or creates an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death. While the groups note that the CPSC recently announced a recall of Internet-connected devices, the cited recall involved a product that posed an actual injury to consumers. CPSC action based on a non-physical injury, such as invasion of privacy, would be breaking new ground, but manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of IoT and other connected products should continue to watch for new developments and consider the potential safety issues associated with the products.