

Many TV companies are being sued for secretly taking screenshots of the content users are watching.

Sony, Samsung, LG, HiSense, and TCL are accused of using ACR technology to capture TV screens and send user data without permission.

User consent is an extremely important issue in the technology field, especially with shared devices like smart TVs. Recently, Microsoft and LG have faced much criticism for allegedly automatically installing the Copilot app on LG TVs without asking for user consent and not allowing uninstallation. However, what is happening now is far more serious.

The Texas Attorney General (AG) has filed lawsuits against five major TV manufacturers, including Sony, Samsung, LG, HiSense, and TCL, regarding violations of user privacy.

The lawsuit stems from allegations that these companies used Automated Content Recognition (ACR) technology to track the content users were watching. According to the lawsuit, ACR is capable of capturing screenshots of the TV screen every 500 milliseconds – equivalent to two images per second – thereby accurately identifying the content being played in real time. Even more concerning, all this data was sent to the manufacturer's servers without the explicit consent of the end user.



The attorney general also specifically highlighted the risk of American citizens' data being sent to servers located in China, owned by HiSense and TCL. Both companies are subject to China's National Security Law, which allows the government to access business data – and consequently, American user data – at any time. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton expressed his concerns:

Companies do not have the right to illegally record activity on Americans' devices right in their own homes.

This behavior is intrusive, deceptive, and illegal. The basic privacy rights of Texans will be protected, as owning a TV does not mean having to compromise personal data to large technology corporations or foreign powers.

In fact, ACR is often used by TV manufacturers to 'identify' user behavior, thereby personalizing displayed content and advertisements to suit each person's viewing preferences. This technology is usually enabled by default on most smart TVs today, but users can still turn it off in the device's privacy settings.

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