
FTC to Host Fall Seminar Series on Emerging Consumer Technology Issues Associated with Ransomware, Drones and Smart TV; Solicits Public Comment

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Read the [FTC Press Release](#)

On March 31, the FTC announced that it will host a series of seminars in the fall of 2016 to examine three new and evolving technologies that are raising important consumer protection issues: ransomware, drones and smart TV. The FTC Fall Technology Series comprises three half-day events, all of which will be located at the FTC's Constitution Center Office, 400 7th St., SW, Washington, DC 20024, and open to the public. The FTC invites comments on these issues prior to (and even after) each event.

This series will collect input from academics, business and industry representatives, government experts and consumer advocates. FTC workshops like this inform subsequent FTC policy, research and enforcement work.

Event 1: Ransomware—9 a.m. to 12 p.m., September 7, 2016

In its announcement of this series, the FTC notes that with increasing frequency, ransomware hackers are sneaking into consumer and business computers, encrypting files containing important data, and then demanding a ransom in exchange for the key needed to decrypt the files. The FTC states that consumers, businesses and government agencies are falling prey to these schemes, including hospitals whose servers may contain sensitive patient data, and that other variants of ransomware are now targeting files on mobile devices. This seminar will address questions such as:

- How do ransomware extortionists gain access to consumer and business computers?
- What role can consumer and business education play in preventing ransomware infections?
- Are there steps consumers and businesses should be taking to reduce the risk of ransomware or to decrease its impact?
- Are there technological measures that computer operating system and web browser designers can take to prevent ransomware?

- Are there browser plug-ins or other tools that consumers and businesses can employ that will warn if their data is about to be encrypted?
- What can be learned from criminal law enforcement's efforts to combat ransomware?
- If you fall prey to ransomware, should you pay the ransom?
- If you pay the ransom, how likely are you to receive the decryption key and be able to view your files?
- What happens if you don't pay the ransom? Are your files lost forever?

Public comments will be accepted until Friday, October 7, 2016. [Comments can be submitted online.](#)

Event 2: Drones—9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., October 13, 2016

The FTC's notice announcing this series notes that Americans are increasingly familiar with drones, also known as unmanned aerial systems, many of which feature high-definition cameras, GPS, and the ability to fly autonomously. While drones may generate significant economic benefits, the FTC notes that the potential for information collection raises the prospect of consumer harms including invasion of privacy, trespass, and harassment. This seminar will explore the following questions related to commercial uses of drones:

- What are the uses and benefits of drones for consumers today? Where is drone technology headed?
- What are the unique privacy and security concerns associated with drone technologies and the data collected from them?
- How are these concerns currently being addressed by businesses, self-regulatory efforts, and foreign regulators? Is there a need for further guidance?

Public comments will be accepted until Monday, November 14, 2016. [Comments can be submitted online.](#)

Event 3: FTC Fall Technology Series: Smart TV—9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., December 7, 2016

The FTC's notice announcing this series notes that in 2016, virtually all television delivery systems—smart TVs, streaming devices, game consoles, apps and set-top boxes—track consumers' viewing habits. The FTC further notes that television and streaming device manufacturers, software developers and the advertising industry are collaborating to learn more about what consumers are watching, and that these collaborations allow advertisers to precisely target consumers and better understand what ads are working. Further, the FTC notes, consumers may find advertisements based on their television viewing habits appearing on their phones and desktop browsers. The Smart TV workshop will explore the following questions:

- What are the roles of hardware manufacturers and software developers in creating tracking technologies?
- What do consumers understand about how their entertainment preferences are being tracked, disclosed, and used for various purposes?
- How are entertainment preferences being linked to individuals or to individuals' device

graphs?

- How is the advertising industry using this information?
- What are some best practices for addressing consumer privacy on entertainment systems?

Public comments will be accepted until Friday, January 6, 2017. [Comments can be submitted online.](#)