

California Enacts Security Law for Alexa, Other IoT Devices

Sep. 28, 2018 6:41PM

Internet-connected devices sold in California must use “reasonable” security features by Jan. 1, 2020 under a new state law.

Gov. Jerry Brown (D) signed two identical bills Sept. 28 that make California the first state in the country to mandate security on the devices, from security cameras, televisions and refrigerators to smart home devices like the Amazon Echo and Google Home. The bills are [S.B. 327](#) by Jackson and [A.B. 1906](#) by Assemblywoman Jacqui Irwin (D).

If the devices connect directly or indirectly to the internet and are assigned internet protocol or Bluetooth addresses, they must have reasonable security features.

California’s new law come amid rising privacy and security concerns about Internet of Things (IoT) devices, including the potential for data collection from users.

Federal Action

Congress hasn’t acted on [a bill introduced](#) in 2017 by Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) to set minimum security standards for IoT devices. But the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which is part of the Commerce Department, [announced](#) it is working on voluntary guidelines that it will release in October.

The California law intentionally lacks specifics about what reasonable security features the devices must have, Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson (D), the author of one of the bills, has said. It is up to the manufacturers to decide what steps to take.

But manufacturers argued the bills are too vague and will be fodder for litigation. They also contend the bills don’t apply to companies that import and resell connected devices made in other countries under their own labels.

Manufacturer Responsibility

The responsibility for installing reasonable security features for the devices falls on manufacturers or those who contract with manufacturers to make devices offered for sale in California.

Medical devices and other items subject to federal standards are exempt from the law.

The Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association, Entertainment Software Association, and National Electrical Manufacturers Association opposed the bills.

Common Sense Kids Action sponsored the bills. Other consumer and privacy groups, including the Consumer Federation of America, Electronic Frontier Foundation and Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, support the measure.