

Google sues alleged scammers over 10,000 fake Maps listings

Google is taking down 10,000 fake business listings from Google Maps and suing a network of scammers who set them up, *CBS News* reports. The company's lawsuit alleges that a man connected to a broader scam network created fake business profiles on Google Maps and sold them for profit. Google was tipped off by a Texas-based locksmith who said someone was impersonating them on Google Maps, which led to the Wednesday lawsuit.

"Scammers are becoming increasingly sophisticated," Google's general counsel Halimah DeLaine Prado said Wednesday on *CBS Mornings Plus*. "Once we're alerted to the actual fraud, we take extreme efforts to identify similar fraudulent listings."

Scammers can use Google Maps to fool people in a number of ways. Victims may stumble upon a fake listing that looks real and call the number. Sometimes, the scammer provides the service when the victim shows up, but will upcharge them. Other times, the victim could be routed to a call center, where scammers can try to convince them to pay for something ahead of time but not actually provide the service. Scammers can use software to pad fake listings with positive reviews; they can also boost the likes on a fake Q&A with illegitimate contacts on a *real* listing to get the Q&A to the top of a search, a Reddit user has found.

Google shared with *CBS News* that it removed or blocked 12 million fake business profiles in 2023. It also said it has seen one million more fake listings year over year. Google has

also been cracking down on businesses that use fake engagement tactics and artificial reviews to boost their ratings. And in the UK, Google implemented restrictions on offending businesses that engage in deceptive review activity after mounting pressure from regulators to take action.

<https://www.theverge.com/news/633601/google-sues-fake-business-scams-maps>