RCS texting updates will bring end-to-end encryption to green bubble chats

One of the best mostly invisible updates in iOS 18 was Apple's decision to finally implement the Rich Communications Services (RCS) communication protocol, something that is slowly helping to fix the generally miserable experience of texting non-iPhone users with an iPhone. The initial iOS 18 update brought RCS support to most major carriers in the US, and the upcoming iOS 18.4 update is turning it on for a bunch of smaller prepaid carriers like Google Fi and Mint Mobile.

Now that Apple is on board, iPhones and their users can also benefit from continued improvements to the RCS standard. And one major update was announced today: RCS will now support end-to-end encryption using the Messaging Layer Security (MLS) protocol, a standard finalized by the Internet Engineering Task Force in 2023.

"RCS will be the first large-scale messaging service to support interoperable E2EE between client implementations from different providers," writes GSMA Technical Director Tom Van Pelt in the post announcing the updates. "Together with other unique security features such as SIM-based authentication, E2EE will provide RCS users with the highest level of privacy and security for stronger protection from scams, fraud and other security and privacy threats. "

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