# Smart gadgets' failure to commit to software support could be illegal, FTC warns

Makers of smart devices that fail to disclose how long they will support their products with software updates may be breaking the Magnuson Moss Warranty Act, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warned this week.

The FTC released its statement after examining 184 smart products across 64 product categories, including soundbars, video doorbells, breast pumps, smartphones, home appliances, and garage door opener controllers. Among devices researched, the majority—or 163 to be precise—"did not disclose the connected device support duration or end date" on their product webpage, per the FTC's report [PDF]. Contrastingly, 11.4 percent of devices examined shared a software support duration or end date on their product page.

## Elusive information

In addition to manufacturers often neglecting to commit to software support for a specified amount of time, it seems that even when they share this information, it's elusive.

For example, the FTC reported that some manufacturers made software support dates available but not on the related product's webpage. Instead, this information is sometimes buried in specs, support, FAQ pages, or footnotes.

The FTC report added:

> *… some used ambiguous language that only imply the level of*

> *support provided, including phrases like, “lifetime technical support,” “as long as your device is fully operational,” and “continuous software updates,” for example. Notably, staff also had difficulty finding on the product webpages the device’s release date …*

At times, the FTC found glaring inconsistencies. For example, one device’s product page said that the device featured “lifetime” support, “but the search result pointing to the manufacturer’s support page indicated that, while other updates may still be active, the security updates for the device had stopped in 2021,” per the FTC.

Those relying on Google’s AI Overviews may also be misled. In one case, AI Overviews pointed to a smart gadget getting “software support and updates for 3–6 months.” But through the link that AI Overviews provided, the FTC found that the three to six months figure that Google scraped actually referred to the device’s battery life. The next day, AI Overviews said that it couldn’t determine the duration of software support or updates for the gadget, the FTC noted.

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