

Hey Alexa, Come Clean About How Much You're Really Recording Us | The Washington Post

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We're learning an important lesson about cutting-edge voice technology: Amazon's Alexa is always listening. So are Google's Assistant and Apple's Siri.

Putting live microphones in our homes has always been an out-there idea. But tech companies successfully marketed talking speakers such as the Amazon Echo and Google Home to millions by assuring they only record us when we give a "wake word."

That turns out to be a misnomer. These devices are always "awake," passively listening for the command to activate, such as "Alexa," "O.K. Google," or "Hey Siri." The problem is they're far from perfect about responding only when we want them to.

The latest, and most alarming example to date: [A family in Portland, Ore., two weeks ago found its Echo had recorded a private conversation and sent it to a random contact.](#) The event, reported by [Washington state's KIRO 7](#), went viral Thursday among Echo owners — and naysayers on the idea of allowing tech companies to put microphones all over our homes.

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