



How To Stop Amazon Alexa From Recording You At Home? Toss It!

Millions of home assistant devices like Alexa listen to, transcribe and record your private conversations. If you don't like that, your only recourse is to kick it out of your house or better yet, don't buy one in the first place. □ TN Editor

If you don't want Alexa to record private conversations in your home then you shouldn't have one.

That's the verdict from cyber-experts who say the only way to truly keep your audio out of Amazon's hands is by ridding your home of Alexa.

Amazon Echo speakers are an amazing gadget that can make your home life easier and more interesting.

But the price you pay is privacy: Amazon stores your Alexa recordings, and sometimes sends those voice clips off to humans.

This creates a privacy nightmare, as these conversations can be private - mistakenly picked up by Alexa.

“If you don’t want to be recorded, don’t buy one – it’s as simple as that,” said cyber-expert Keith Geraghty, of edgescan, speaking to The Sun.

“We don’t realise how often we discuss sensitive information out loud.

“Remember that it is likely multiple devices in a modern home environment that are recording, not just your Alexa speaker.”

Earlier this week, an ex-Amazon exec admitted that workers do listen to your conversations through Alexa.

And he said he turns his Alexa speaker off when he wants to have a “private moment”.

You can turn this “human grading” off in your settings, and even delete your recordings – but the audio is still saved in the first instance.

Sadly, the only way to stop that is to bin Alexa completely.

“While it may seem like Alexa or Google Home is in your house, all of the data you share with that device is transmitted to the cloud, and specifically to Amazon or Google,” Paul Norris, a cyber-expert at Tripwire, told The Sun.

“The easiest way to avoid these risks is simply not to buy the devices.”

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World Urban Forum Looks To Cities To Advance 2030 Agenda

The master plan for all cities around the world, including those in the United States, is embodied in the UN's 2030 Agenda, which officially states that the objective is to transform the world into Sustainable Development, aka Technocracy. □ TN Editor

Participants at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF10) unpacked the theme of 'Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation.'

Opening speakers set the tone for the Forum, which took place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 8-13 February 2020. Falah Mohammad Al Ahbabi, Chairman of Abu Dhabi's Department of Municipalities and Transport, pointed to mass migration and technological progress as two trends demanding a "renewed understanding of locality," which includes safety, inclusiveness and social cohesion. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said via video that urbanization continues to feature high rates of inequality, and called for all stakeholders, including local governments, to partner with the UN

to tackle the climate emergency.

Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan, said that organizational cultures in “communities of knowledge” constitute a significant constraint, suggesting that several international organizations are “still reflections of a different world.” Fiji’s Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama emphasized the need to make urban living synonymous with sustainability. UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif noted that “SDG 11 is where all of the SDGs come together,” and called for turning urbanization into a net positive contributor to life on Earth.

More than 18,000 participants registered for the Forum, which began with five Assembly meetings of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) constituency groups that provided input to the Habitat III process, namely women, youth, grassroots, and the World Assembly for Local and Regional Government.

Among the initiatives launched and discussed during WUF10 were UN-Habitat’s launch of the ‘SDG Project Assessment Tool: an innovative tool for inclusive, sustainable and effective urban projects,’ as well as ‘RISE UP: resilient settlements for the urban poor,’ which seeks to mobilize and coordinate large-scale investments in climate change adaptation and resilience for the urban poor. Penny Abeywardena, Mayor’s Office of International Affairs, New York City, US, issued a call for local and regional governments to sign the Voluntary Local Review Declaration, noting that 20 new cities had already done so at WUF10.

Examples from countries and local communities discussed during WUF10 included the following:

- a program in the Municipality of Mogadishu, Somalia, aimed at introducing the country’s youth to its pre-conflict history;
- the use of sport as a critical space for “meeting and resocialization,” with the city of Medellín, Colombia reporting that it has succeeded in decreasing drug trafficking and use by engaging communities in sports;
- Senegal’s experience in using industrial taxes to subsidize housing programmes and creating dedicated housing funds;

- Jordan's model of distributing land and houses at affordable prices;
- the work of the Bear Clan Patrol Inc., in Winnipeg, Canada, which draws on traditional clan roles to support safety and cultural restoration for indigenous communities in the city; and
- examples of involvement from youth in many countries, including a presentation by Martin Lucas Sortland Eick, Norwegian youth delegate, regarding his efforts to see youth "take true ownership" of SDG implementation in his country.

At the close of WUF10, delegates adopted the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions, the main outcome document of the meeting. The document presents participants' perspectives on the relationship between culture, innovation, and urban development. In the Declared Actions, participants highlight that: culture is fundamental to identity and heritage, and is an integral part of the solution to the challenges of urbanization; cities are the incubators of social, economic, environmental, political and cultural progress; linking data, innovation and advances in science and technology with policy is critical for implementing the 2015 New Urban Agenda (NUA) and achieving the SDGs; and further action and commitments by actors at the local, national and global levels are welcomed in support of the NUA and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In closing remarks, UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande commended WUF10 for marking one of the first events of the UN Decade of Action. He described culture and innovation as key for promoting socially cohesive, peaceful and resilient societies, noting that culture plays a critical role in fostering human rights and peaceful coexistence. He described the NUA as one of the most important blueprints to achieving sustainable cities, and called for innovation to become more climate resilient and better prepared for disaster recovery and risk reduction.

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China's Technocracy Leads To 'Digital Caste System' With Coronavirus

China's Technocracy failed to keep coronavirus in the laboratory, but now throws more technology at their problem now that it is at epidemic levels: namely, surveillance plus AI to automate and herd individual quarantine. □ TN Editor

The Chinese government is using the massive amount of data it has collected to categorize people according to their likelihood of infection by the new coronavirus. But some people say they have been incorrectly tagged and forced into quarantine.

On Valentine's Day, a 36-year-old lawyer in eastern China discovered he had been coded "red."

The lawyer, Matt Ma, was effectively put in chains. The color, displayed in a payment app on his smartphone, indicated that he needed to be quarantined at home even though he was not sick.

Without a green light from the system, he could not travel from his home village to the eastern city of Hangzhou, or make it past the checkpoints that have sprung up across the city as a measure to contain the new coronavirus.

Ma is one of the millions of people whose movements are being choreographed by the government through software that feeds on troves of data and spits out orders that effectively dictate whether they must stay in or can go to work.

Their experience represents a slice of China's desperate attempt to stop a devastating contagion using a mixed bag of cutting-edge technologies and old-fashioned surveillance. It was also a rare real-world test of the use of technology at a large scale to halt the spread of communicable diseases.

"This kind of massive use of technology is unprecedented," said Christos Lynteris, a medical anthropologist at the University of St Andrews who has studied epidemics in China.

But Hangzhou's experiment has also revealed the pitfalls of applying opaque formulas on a large population.

In the city's case, there are reports of people being marked incorrectly, falling victim to an algorithm that is, by the government's own admission, not perfect.

Red alert

The rating system that snagged Ma is known as Health Code and can be accessed through the Alipay payment app. It was developed by Ant Financial, an affiliate of e-commerce giant Alibaba, and local authorities of Hangzhou, home to many of China's biggest tech companies. (Alibaba also owns *Inkstone*.)

It was launched last week as millions of Chinese people began returning to work after a Lunar New Year holiday that was extended by the coronavirus epidemic.

The color code is the result of an automated analysis that uses what Chinese officials have called “big data” to identify potential carriers of the coronavirus as the country gets back to work.

Chinese official state media has reported that the system covers three provinces - Zhejiang, Sichuan and Hainan - and the municipality of Chongqing with a total population of nearly 180 million, and will soon cover the entire country.

In Hangzhou, where the system was first launched, the city’s deputy Communist Party chief Zhang Zhongcan said the software takes into consideration one’s self-declared health status, travel history and the people they have been in close contact with.

The city has assigned every resident one of three colors - green, yellow and red - indicating different levels of risk the person poses to public health.



Photo: Weibo

People with QR codes colored in red are not allowed to enter public venues such as subway stations, restaurants and shopping malls for at least 14 days. Workers at those places are able to scan the QR code to verify the users’ identity. Yellow code holders face similar restrictions,

but for seven days.

Among the 7.6 million Hangzhou residents who had obtained the digital health certification by February 17, 93% were marked “green,” while 4%, or about 335,000 people, got the red code.

Not everyone is happy with the ratings they got. On China’s Twitter-like Weibo, many holders of the red tag have complained that they don’t know why they have been rated as high risk and prevented from going out.

Some said their code turned red after they ticked “stuffy nose” or “fatigue” on the system’s health declaration form, even though the symptoms are common and could have nothing to do with the coronavirus.

The online critics have compared the color codes to “certificates of good conduct” or a “caste system.”

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