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Information sheet on COVID Alert app

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Canada's COVID Alert exposure notification app was launched on Friday, July 31, 2020. This information sheet was prepared by the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner to provide Yukoners with additional background about the app and how it works.

The COVID Alert app

The COVID Alert exposure notification app is a software application made available by the Government of Canada. Canadians can download the app onto their cell phones in order to support contact tracing efforts to detect persons who may have been exposed to COVID-19.

If a person tests positive for COVID-19, they receive a code from their public health authority that they can upload into the app. This triggers a notification which is sent to other app users who were in proximity to the person (during the past 14 days) who tested positive, informing them of possible exposure to COVID-19. Those who receive this notification are encouraged by the app to get tested. The app users who receive the notification about possible exposure will not know the identity of the individual or where the exposure may have occurred.

During the development of this app, privacy commissioners from across Canada were involved in reviewing any privacy risks associated with the app and found the risks to be very low. Detail about this review can be found at https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/health-genetic-and-other-body-information/health-emergencies/rev_covid-app/.

Current shortcomings associated with the COVID Alert app

Recent news reports have identified that the COVID Alert app does not work on smart or android phones that are more than five years old.

In addition, Ontario is so far the only participating province or territory. This means that Canadians in other provinces and territories may download the app but will not receive notifications about resident app users in their province or territory who test positive for COVID-19 until the health authorities in these jurisdictions begin to participate. The Yukon Department of Health and Social Services is currently not participating.

Will Yukoners benefit from using the COVID Alert app?

Although Yukon is not currently participating in the COVID Alert app system, there are still benefits for Yukoners who download the app.

If a Yukoner downloads the COVID Alert app and then travels to Ontario, they will be notified if they are in proximity to an Ontarian app user who has uploaded their positive COVID-19 test results into the app.

Yukon app users will also receive this notification if an exposure of this kind occurs in Yukon or in any other place in Canada, when they have been in proximity to an Ontarian app user who tests positive for the virus and who uploads their positive test result.

Yukon app users will *not* be notified if they are exposed to another Yukon app user who tests positive for the virus, until Yukon is a participating territory.

Only use verified contact tracing applications

Yukoners are advised to only use the contact tracing application discussed and referred to in this article, if any, and to be watchful for fake applications that may be offered in the app or google play stores. Fake applications have been used to spread ransomware or steal personal and financial information from users for the purpose of committing fraud.

More information on fake apps can be found at <https://www.itworldcanada.com/article/fake-canadian-covid-19-tracing-app-with-ransomware-discovered/432410>.

More about the COVID Alert app

More information about the app can be found at the following links.

- Federal and Ontario privacy commissioners support use of COVID Alert application subject to ongoing monitoring of its privacy protections and effectiveness
https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/opc-news/news-and-announcements/2020/nr-c_200731/
- Supporting public health, building public trust: Privacy principles for contact tracing and similar apps https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/opc-news/speeches/2020/s-d_20200507/
- Government of Canada, Download COVID Alert today <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/covid-alert.html>

The purpose of this document is to inform Yukoners about the recently-developed COVID-19 Alert app.

This document is not intended as, nor is it a substitute for, legal advice. This document is not binding on Yukon's Information and Privacy Commissioner.



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