

## **FACT SHEET: WHAT'S AT STAKE AS WE APPEAL THE EPIC V. GOOGLE DECISION**

Google is taking additional steps today to protect 100 million U.S. Android users, over 500,000 U.S. developers and thousands of partners from a harmful and unwarranted District Court order. We're asking the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to pause the proposed changes to Android and Google Play as [our appeal](#) of the underlying decision continues.

If allowed to stand, this District Court order threatens Google Play's ability to provide a safe and trusted user experience, thereby undermining the Android ecosystem's ability to compete with Apple's iOS. This wouldn't just hurt Google – this would have negative consequences for Android users, developers and device manufacturers who have built thriving businesses on Android. Here is more on what's at stake:

### **Forcing Google to distribute third-party app stores *within* Google Play harms safety and privacy**

Android users have always been able to download and use third-party app stores, but when they come to Google Play, they have an expectation of the security, privacy and content protections that will apply. Forcing Google to distribute third-party app stores through Google Play will cause confusion as to whether Google is vouching for those app stores and raises real risk for our users. For example, we have strict policies that guard against many threats to users, such as privacy violations and inappropriate content (sexual content, hate speech, violent extremism, etc.). We review apps and any subsequent updates for compliance with these policies. Requiring that we distribute third-party app stores with potentially less rigorous protections could expose users to downloading harmful content, especially when users have an expectation that apps downloaded from Google Play are vetted and safe.

### **Handing hundreds of third-party Android app stores access to Google Play's app catalog reduces developers' control over app distribution and puts users at risk**

Developers choose to distribute their apps on Google Play because we've earned their trust through our rigorous app screening and content guidelines. But the District Court order would allow any rival Android app store to offer Google Play's full catalog of apps. This harms businesses who don't want their apps or intellectual property associated with unknown stores or alongside inappropriate content. As we shared with the appeals court today, there are hundreds of Android app stores; access to the entire Google Play catalog would give a bad-intentioned third-party app store a veneer of legitimacy. This is also dangerous for users. Even if a developer opts-out from a particular store, users wouldn't know that and be on alert for pirated apps or other threats because the non-Play store otherwise looks like it has the entire Play catalog available for download.

### **Linking out from within an app on Google Play to external app downloads is dangerous**

This creates significant risk of deceptive links. For example, a malicious actor could then use the link to download malware onto a phone, steal a user's data, or engage in a phishing attack. Sophisticated malicious actors may even use bait-and-switch strategies to gain users' trust before exposing them to harmful content via links. Additionally, if a malicious app is downloaded onto a user's device, it may have overly broad permissions to access a user's screen, keyboard, photos, and more. This would be deeply problematic if these dangers were one simple download away from a Google Play-distributed app where our users have an expectation of safety. These threats are real and jeopardize user privacy and security.

### **Removing Play billing as an option reduces important protections and features users rely on:**

In the U.S., many developers can already offer users the choice between Google Play's billing system and an alternative billing system. When users choose Play's billing, they trust us to provide a seamless refund process, easy subscription management, and other forms of customer support for their in-app digital goods. This enables them to easily engage or transact across multiple developers. Users also benefit from features like parental controls, family budgeting and shared payments, and the ability to use Google Play gift cards. Most importantly, we offer protection to keep their payment information secure. But the District Court's injunction makes it so developers can remove the option of Google Play Billing altogether and force an option that may not have the safeguards and features that users expect.

### **Rushing the implementation of remedies will raise risks to users, developers, and device makers:**

These are just some of the ways that the District Court has ordered Google to redesign its product and business model in unprecedented and dangerous ways. All of these concerns are amplified by the fact that the injunction orders many changes to be operational by November 1, 2024. This provides Google less than four weeks to try and mitigate the serious risks posed or ensure that new features work properly. Android and the Play store operate at scale and are used by many millions of American consumers every day. Rushed updates at this scale can lead to major unintended issues that affect functionality of devices, the privacy and security interests of millions of users, and the business success of device manufacturers and developers.

**You can read more in today's motion to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.**