

FTC probes Twitter data practices after Elon Musk's layoffs

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The Twitter splash page is seen on a digital device on April 25, 2022, in San Diego. The Federal Trade Commission is investigating Elon Musk's mass layoffs at Twitter and trying to obtain his internal communications as part of ongoing oversight into the social media company's privacy and cybersecurity practices, according to documents described in a congressional report. Credit: AP Photo/Gregory Bull, File

The Federal Trade Commission is investigating Elon Musk's mass layoffs at Twitter and trying to obtain his internal communications as part of ongoing oversight into the social media company's privacy and cybersecurity practices, according to documents described in a congressional report.

The FTC has been watching the company for years since Twitter agreed to a 2011 consent order alleging serious data security lapses. But the agency's concerns spiked with [the tumult that followed](#) Musk's Oct. 27 takeover of the company.

The Republican-led House Judiciary Committee published excerpts from the FTC's letters Tuesday as part of a report alleging that the agency was overreaching "to harass Elon Musk's Twitter."

The House said the requests amounted to a deluge of "demands about its personnel decisions in each of the company's departments, every internal communication relating to Elon Musk and even Twitter's interactions with journalists" who Musk's team allowed to see certain employee emails and messages.

Those documents were dubbed "The Twitter Files" and were meant to show how the company made decisions to moderate content before Musk took over.

In a response to the House [report](#), the FTC said, "Protecting consumers' privacy is exactly what the FTC is supposed to do. It should come as no surprise that career staff at the commission are conducting a rigorous investigation into Twitter's compliance with a consent order that came into effect long before Mr. Musk purchased the company."

Twitter had already paid a \$150 million penalty in May, about five months before Musk's takeover, for violating the 2011 consent order. An

updated version established new procedures requiring the [company](#) to implement an enhanced privacy-protection program as well as beefing up [information security](#).

But in November, [a group of Democratic senators](#) called those commitments into question and asked the FTC—led by Chair Lina Khan, a Democrat—to investigate any possible violations amid concerns that reports of Twitter's disorder and drastically reduced staff under Musk posed serious security risks.

The FTC said at the time it was "tracking recent developments at Twitter with deep concern."

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