

US bans pharmacy Rite Aid from facial recognition use

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Rite Aid has been ordered to stop using facial recognition for the next five years after finding the technology falsely identified some consumers as shoplifters.

Pharmacy group Rite Aid was ordered Tuesday to stop using facial recognition for the next five years by a US regulator, which said the company falsely identified consumers as shoplifters using the technology.

The case touches on one of the main concerns about the proliferation of artificial intelligence, and facial recognition in particular, which is deemed to potentially misidentify or discriminate against individuals, especially non-whites and women.

"Rite Aid's reckless use of facial surveillance systems left its customers facing humiliation and other harms," said Samuel Levine, director of consumer harms at the Federal Trade Commission.

The FTC said that from 2012 to 2020, Rite Aid deployed [facial recognition](#) technology to spot repeated shoplifting offenders and other problematic behavior.

But the technology "falsely flagged... consumers as matching someone who had previously been identified as a shoplifter or other troublemaker."

The pharmacy group, which is currently in bankruptcy proceedings, also failed to properly train employees about the fact that there could be [false positives](#) with the technology or to prevent the use of low-quality images.

In addition to the ban, the FTC ordered the group and any other company involved to delete all data connected to its program.

Rite-Aid said it was "pleased to reach an agreement with the FTC and put this matter behind us."

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