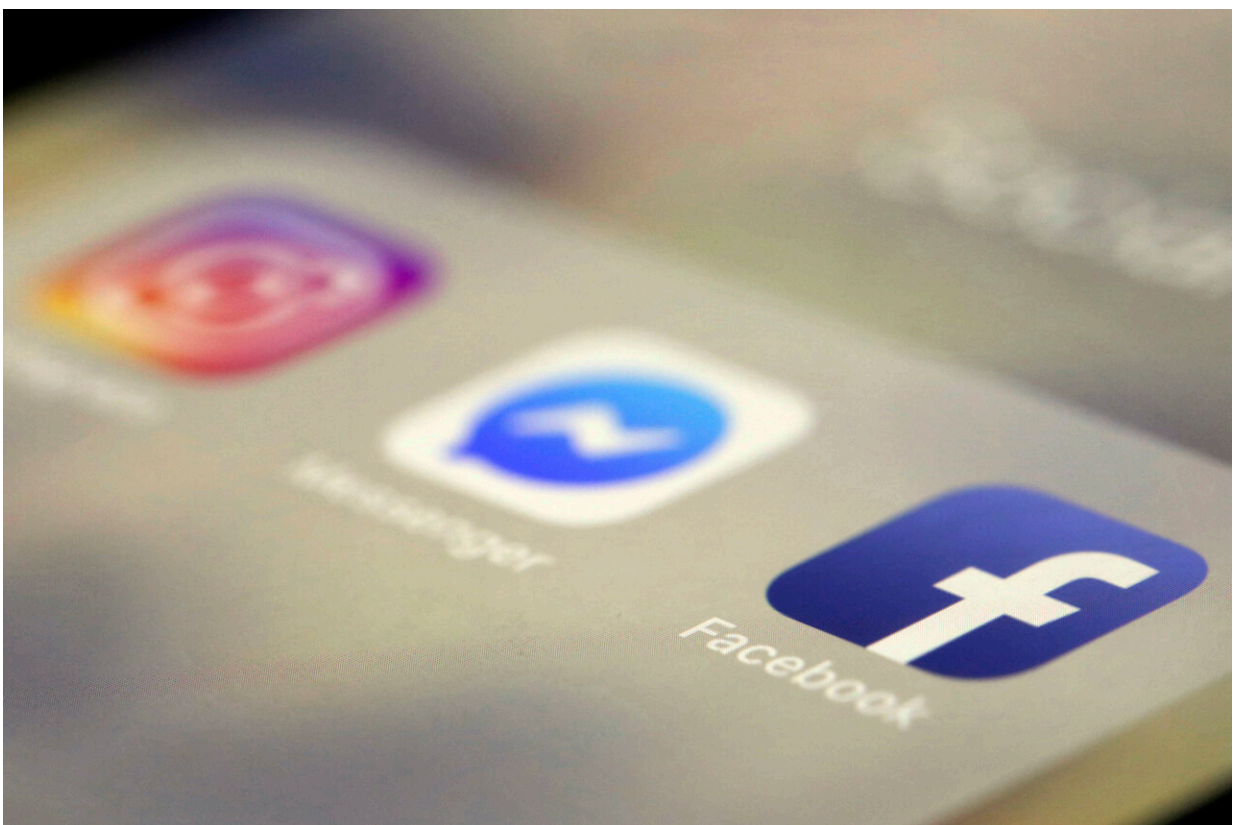


State AGs send letter to Meta asking it to take 'immediate action' on user account takeovers

March 7 2024



In this March 13, 2019, file photo Facebook, Messenger and Instagram apps are displayed on an iPhone in New York. A group of 40 state attorneys general sent a letter to Instagram and Facebook parent company Meta expressing concern over what they say is dramatic uptick of consumer complaints about account takeovers and lockouts. The AGs called on Meta to do a better job preventing account takeovers. Credit: AP Photo/Jenny Kane, File

A group of 40 state attorneys general have sent a letter to Instagram and Facebook parent company Meta expressing "deep concern" over what they say is dramatic uptick of consumer complaints about account takeovers and lockouts.

The attorneys general called on Meta to do a better job preventing account takeovers—when malicious actors take a users' accounts, lock them out by changing their passwords, and post their own material, read private messages, scam contacts and engage in other harmful or illegal behavior.

The letter asks Meta to take "immediate action to increase mitigation tactics and respond to users whose accounts have been taken over." It also asks the Menlo Park, California-based company to provide information on the number of account takeovers over the past five years, the suspected causes of the increase in account takeovers and safeguards it has in place.

"Consumers are reporting their utter panic when they first realize they have been effectively locked out of their accounts," says the letter dated March 5. "Users spend years building their personal and professional lives on your platforms, posting intimate thoughts, and sharing personal details, locations, and photos of family and friends. To have it taken away from them through no fault of their own can be traumatizing."

Even worse, the letter says, the takeovers pose a significant financial risk to users, who may be running businesses or have credit card information linked to their social media accounts.

In a statement, Meta said scammers are constantly adapting to evade crackdowns.

"We invest heavily in our trained enforcement and review teams and have specialized detection tools to identify compromised accounts and other fraudulent activity," the company said. "We regularly share tips and tools people can use to protect themselves, provide a means to report potential violations, work with law enforcement and take legal action."

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Citation: State AGs send letter to Meta asking it to take 'immediate action' on user account takeovers (2024, March 7) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2024-03-state-ags-letter-meta-action.html>

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