

A public network name that 'permanently' disables Wi-Fi on iPhones

6 July 2021, by Bob Yirka



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A security researcher named Carl Schou has found a serious bug on iOS devices. He posted on his [Twitter feed](#) that users connecting to a certain public network name will lose Wi-Fi connectivity—and that resetting the network settings will not restore it.

The network name is "%secretclub%power." Schou runs a not-for-profit entity called Secret Club. Members there attempt to reverse engineer software for what they describe as research purposes. Last week, Schou reported that he had found a flaw with iOS devices that also involved devices connecting to certain networks and losing their connectivity. In that instance, the network name was "%p%s%s%s%s%n"—devices connecting to it lost connectivity, but users were able to restore it by using their [device's network settings](#) feature.

Shou has reportedly notified Apple about the new bug but has apparently not yet heard back. In the meantime, sources are advising users to steer clear of networks with either network name. Other sources are also claiming to have tried to contact

Apple about the problem but also have not heard back.

It should be noted that at this time, no one is suggesting that the network name was chosen for the purpose of disabling iPhone connectivity or that the bug is related to hackers or malware. As the team at 9to5 Mac suggest, it is more likely a string processing error that was overlooked by the programming team at Apple. They note that the percent character is used in [programming languages](#) to process strings of characters. They suggest that the percent characters in the public name may result in a memory write overflow, which could lead to communications failures. Because of this, they are suggesting that users not connect to any public network with a percent symbol in its name.

You can permanently disable any iOS device's WiFi by hosting a public WiFi named %secretclub%power. Resetting network settings is not guaranteed to restore functionality. [#infosec #0day](#)

— Carl Schou (@vm_call) [July 4, 2021](#)

It has not yet been confirmed, but some entities are suggesting that a factory reset will restore Wi-Fi on impacted devices, but of course, that will lead to loss of phone data. Others have reported that running iTunes somehow fixed the problem, while still others suggest that it is possible to fix the problem by removing the [network](#) name manually from "apple.com."

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