



Uber's first transparency report details regulatory data requests

April 13, 2016

"We hope our Transparency Report will lead to a public debate about the types and amounts of information regulated services should be required to provide to their regulators, and under what circumstances", the company said.

The CPUC fined Uber \$7.6 million in January for failing to comply with its reporting requirements about accessible cars, the number of rides requested and accepted per ZIP code, and driver safety information. Uber says most law enforcement requests were to help catch criminals booking rides with stolen credit cards.

The company also said it has "not received a National Security Letter or FISA order" as of the date of the report. That attitude is part of Uber's ongoing battle over data requests. The company revealed the information in its first transparency report published Tuesday.

Uber says regulators are asking more of digital corporations than of older companies, like taxi services. Since this is Uber we're talking about, there is also a healthy dose of chest-puffing throughout the report. When it comes to law enforcement requests, Uber complies with "the majority" of those, after going through the proper legal channels.

In terms of the actual requests, 415 in total during the period were said to have been issued. In many cases, Uber says they've tried to narrow the scope of what data they're being asked for. The recent dustup between Apple and the Federal Bureau of Investigation over access to the San Bernardino shooter's iPhone shone a spotlight on interactions between government agencies and the consumer tech industry. Uber's dealings with law enforcement have recently been in the news after an Uber driver in Kalamazoo, Mich. was charged with six counts of murder.

The report does not specify how many of these cases were related to rape and sexual assault. "I think it's always concerning when location data and other possibly identifying data is being shared by third parties about you", he said.

"There seems to be much more sharing of personal data for a less important objective, which raises privacy flags for me", said Jim Harper, senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute.