

US state to get \$230M from \$500M Google forfeiture

LAURA CRIMALDI - Associated Press - Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island (AP) — Rhode Island law enforcement agencies that participated in an investigation that resulted in Google Inc. forfeiting \$500 million last year will receive \$230 million of that money, federal officials said Monday.

Google forfeited the money last August to settle a U.S. government investigation into its distribution of online ads from Canadian pharmacies illegally selling prescription drugs to American consumers. The investigation found that Google allowed Canadian pharmacies that illegally imported drugs into the United States to advertise on its AdWords platform.

The \$500 million sum represents the gross revenues Google collected in ad buys from hundreds of Canadian pharmacies, plus the earnings generated from the illegal drug sales to American consumers from 2003 to 2009, federal officials have said.

U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha said it may be the largest sum ever distributed among law enforcement groups under a program that allows forfeited funds to be shared with agencies that participate in federal probes.

The remaining \$270 million will be shared by various federal agencies and the Department of Justice.

In a statement, Google said: "We take responsibility for our actions. With hindsight, we shouldn't have allowed these ads on Google in the first place."

The Mountain View, California-based company has said it is no longer letting Canadian online pharmacies advertise to U.S. consumers. Google has also said it has taken steps to prevent shady operators from advertising on the Internet search engine, including suing advertisers who were running scams and suing rogue pharmacies that were trying to circumvent company policies and verification procedures.

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