Stay Smart about Smartphone App Downloads
## BBB Offers 10 Tips for Safer App Downloads

(Yuma, AZ – March 24, 2014) Smartphone and mobile applications (apps) can make life easier, placing dozens of useful tools and entertainment choices in the palm of our hand. However, with new apps being developed almost daily, users need to be more conscious about the legitimacy of apps, particularly those that collect or access personal information. Better Business Bureau (BBB) urges consumers to make smart choices when downloading apps, making sure the apps don't take more information than what is needed to do the job, give unintended permissions, or contain malware.

According to a 2013 Nielsen report on mobile consumers, 62 percent of smartphone users in the U.S. use apps, with social networking app usage being the strongest having 85 percent of smartphone owners as regular users. Maps/navigation/search and productivity apps also rank high in usage, as well as games.

"While apps offer easy access to news, maps and games, it is important to remember that some are created specifically to download malicious software or access personal information for fraud purposes," said Janet Torricellas, BBB Director for the Yuma Branch Office. "Before clicking the 'agree' button to download, consumers should conduct some research."

While some apps perform as intended, recent headlines show how problematic apps can be used for fraud. For example, the fake Flappy Bird app took over devices sending messages to premium numbers and causing unwanted charges on the victim's phone bill. Another—a flashlight app—gathered more information and permissions than consumers understood, deceiving users about how their geo-location information was shared with advertisers and other third parties.
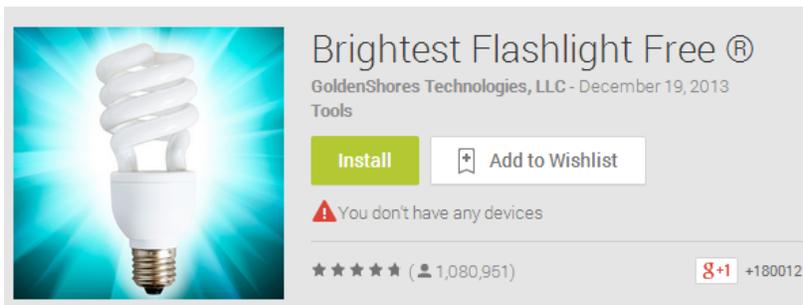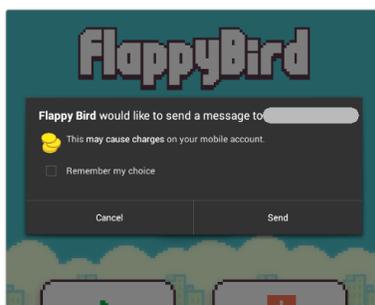
Smartphone users should consider the following 10 tips before downloading apps:

1. **Research** companies, apps and developers before downloading apps.

2. **Read privacy policies before agreeing** to the terms and conditions. Understand how your information will be used and secured.

3. **Consider opting out** of location sharing. However, some apps, like maps and compasses, may require geo-location information in order to work properly.

4. **Check privacy settings** on your smartphone and keep them as high as you can without altering the functions of apps.

5. **Update apps when new versions come out**. Often, app updates fix problems from earlier versions. However, take the same precautions with updates as you would with new app installations.

6. **Delete** apps you no longer use or need.

7. **Stay away** from discontinued apps.

8. **Read user reviews** before downloading apps.

9. Download apps through **official app stores**, not alternative or third-party markets.

10. **Use security** and antivirus programs on your smartphone, just as you would on a computer. Search official app stores for reputable anti-virus options.

For more information and tips you can trust, visit BBB's News Center at Yuma.bbb.org.

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