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CIAC

**Colorado Information
Analysis Center**

Department of Public Safety

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS BULLETIN

(U) Social and Safety Implications of New Social Media App, Gas

(U) The Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC) has prepared this Situational Awareness Bulletin to provide information for law enforcement and public safety partners regarding the recent popularity of the social media application, Gas, and the potential safety concerns the app may pose to local schools and the community.

(U) Gas is a new social media application released on 29 August 2022.¹ Its target audience is high school students, with Apple's App Store listing it as 12+.²

- (U) When joining the app, a user is asked to provide their location to see a list of nearby schools. The user then picks their school from the list and selects their grade level.
- (U) Next, the app asks the user if they would like to import their contact list or add friends manually. Once added, the app generates "positive polls" and allows the user to vote for their friends in the polls.
- (U) When the user is voted for in a poll, they receive a "flame" which notifies them that they were chosen, but are unable to see who voted for them. However, the user can pay a monthly fee ranging from \$4.99 to \$9.99 for "God Mode", which allows the user to see the names of the those who voted for them.³

(U) As of 22 November 2022, Gas was only available in parts of the country and was ranked as the 2nd Top Free Social Networking App on the App Store.⁴ The app is not available on the Google Play Store, but multiple counterfeit versions of Gas have been uploaded there to defraud consumers. The app is now available nationwide and is currently ranked 7th in Top Free Social Networking Apps on the App Store.⁵

(U) Gas gained national attention in October 2022 when messages to developers and negative reviews on the App Store accused it of being associated with the trafficking of minors.⁶

- (U) On 31 October 2022, the Piedmont, Oklahoma Police Department released a statement cautioning parents of the app.⁷
- (U) The Oktaha Public School System in Oklahoma made a post on their Facebook page advising that the app is leading to children being kidnapped, stating: "this new app is thought to be the source of predators finding their location."⁸

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- (U) Both posts were quickly removed after the CEO of Gas, Nikita Bier, reached out to each agency to confirm that the app was safe and the association with child trafficking was a hoax. ⁹

(U) While the app received significant attention for a speculated association with the trafficking of minors, there has been no evidence to support this claim. However, the app still warrants caution due to its safety and privacy policies as well as the potential social impacts on its users. Potential concerns include:

- (U) Privacy/Safety Concerns:
 - (U) The Gas safety page warns users against joining schools that they do not attend as people they may not know can send friend requests. However, there is no initial mechanism to verify a user's age or school. ¹⁰
 - (U) Further the app clarifies that "adding strangers will allow people who don't know you to vote on you". ¹¹
 - (U) Gas developed a system that will remove users who do not have any contacts at the school they claim to attend. ¹²
 - (U) Gas currently has no parental controls. ¹³
 - (U) Gas presents privacy concerns as once a user joins a school, the user can see a list of student's names who attend that school. ¹⁴
 - (U) The Gas data policy states that Gas "keep(s) your data until we don't need it for the purposes described in this policy and we have no legal obligation to keep it" ¹⁵, indicating that there is no specific timeline in which the data will be deleted.
 - (U) Gas's policy does not clarify how a user's data is protected, nor does it provide a mechanism for users to opt out of data sharing. ¹⁶
- (U) Social Implications:
 - (U) Gas has the potential to cause social media addiction, stress, anxiety, and cyberbullying. ¹⁷
 - (U) It is estimated that through the use of Gas and the need for social validation, some students may experience low self-esteem or depression if they do not receive the results they expected from polls. ¹⁸

(U) Gas CEO Nikita Bier states that one in three teens in the United States has installed Gas and the app has had at least 5.12 million downloads as of early November 2022. ^{19,20} The app has recently moved down from #2 in the Free Social Networking Apps in the App Store to #7. ²¹

(U) Safe2Tell provides an anonymous venue for parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and law enforcement to share information. The following are local resources that can be used to report suspicious activity:

- (U) Safe2Tell Website: www.safe2tell.org
- (U) Safe2Tell 24/7 Phone line: 1-877-542-7233
- (U) Safe2Tell Colorado Mobile App: Called Safe2Tell CO, allows users to submit anonymous reports directly within the app

(U) The CIAC also provides the opportunity to make suspicious activity reports 24/7 via phone, email, website, and smartphone application.

- (U) CIAC 24/7 Phone line: 1-877-509-2422
- (U) CIAC E-mail: cdps_ciac@state.co.us
- (U) Report Suspicious Behavior: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dhsem/ciac>
- (U) *See Something/Send Something Mobile App* (called "See Send"): The free app allows users to directly report suspicious behavior from the app

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) Information utilized in this Situational Awareness Bulletin was derived from open source reporting and law enforcement sources. When possible, open source information has been corroborated through other law enforcement and government sources. Information in this bulletin is not considered fully evaluated or finished intelligence.

(U) Consumer: CO Law Enforcement
CO Fire/EMS
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(U) For questions or comments regarding this Situational Awareness Bulletin, please contact the Colorado Information Analysis Center by email at cdps_ciac@state.co.us or at 877-509-2422.

CIAC Survey

(U) Please take a moment to complete this survey and help evaluate the quality, value, and relevance of our intelligence product. Your response will help us serve you more effectively and efficiently in the future. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

[Click here to take survey](#)

(U) This report addresses the following CIAC Standing Information Needs: CIAC SIN-09, and HSEC-N/A.

(U) Endnotes

¹ (U); Taylor Lorenz; Washington Post; "How a viral teen app became the center of a sex trafficking hoax"; 09 NOV 2022; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/11/09/debunking-gap-app-sex-trafficking-rumor/>; accessed on 21 NOV 2022; (U) News Article

² (U); Apple App Store; "Gas"; accessed on 21 NOV 2022; (U) Website

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ (U); Apple App Store; "Gas"; accessed on 22 NOV 2022; (U) Website

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ (U); Taylor Lorenz; Washington Post; "How a viral teen app became the center of a sex trafficking hoax"; 09 NOV 2022; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/11/09/debunking-gap-app-sex-trafficking-rumor/>; accessed on 21 NOV 2022; (U) News Article

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ (U); Gas App; "Safety"; <https://www.gasapp.co/safety/>; accessed on 23 NOV 2022; (U) Website

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² (U); Ann-Marie Alcántara; The Wall Street Journal; "The Hottest App Right Now? One Where Teens Have to Say Nice Things About Each Other"; 17 OCT 2022; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-hottest-app-right-now-one-where-teens-have-to-say-nice-things-about-each-other-11665940854>; accessed on 29 NOV 2022; (U) News Article

¹³ (U); bark; "Is the Gas App Safe? A Gas App Review for Parents"; <https://www.bark.us/app-reviews/apps/gas-app/>; accessed on 23 NOV 2022; (U) Blog

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ (U); Gas App; "Privacy"; <https://www.gasapp.co/privacy/>; accessed on 23 NOV 2022; (U) Website

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ (U); bark; "Is the Gas App Safe? A Gas App Review for Parents"; <https://www.bark.us/app-reviews/apps/gas-app/>; accessed on 23 NOV 2022; (U) Blog

¹⁸ (U); Shubham Attri, Deasilex; "Is Gas App Safe? Review, Working & Rating"; 18 NOV 2022;

<https://deasilex.com/is-gas-app-safe/>; accessed on 22 NOV 2022; (U) Blog

¹⁹ (U); Nikita Bier; Twitter; "One in three teens have installed the Gas app in the United States"; 15 NOV 2022;

<https://twitter.com/nikitabier/status/1592763511775850496>; accessed 29 NOV 2022; (U) Social Media

²⁰ (U); Nikita Bier; Twitter; "Total Downloads: 5.12M"; 03 NOV 2022;

<https://twitter.com/nikitabier/status/1590513826503741441>; accessed 29 NOV 2022; (U) Social Media

²¹ (U); Apple App Store; "Gas"; accessed on 22 NOV 2022; (U) Website