

Google's openness intensifies focus on e-mail woes

March 12 2009, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Google Inc.'s recent pledge to be more open about periodic service outages appears to be drawing more attention to the breakdowns when they occur, even if it's a minor hiccup affecting a sliver of its users.

A prime example of the phenomenon surfaced Tuesday and Wednesday when some of Google's e-mail users couldn't get into their accounts. The outage occurred around 2 a.m. Pacific time Tuesday, with most of the affected users regaining access to their e-mail within 30 minutes.

A "small subset" of Gmail's more than 100 million users were locked out of their e-mail until early Wednesday morning, according to [Google](#). Company spokesman Andrew Kovacs declined to elaborate on how many people couldn't get their [Gmail](#) or what parts of the world were affected.

Word of the trouble quickly spread because two weeks ago Google set up a Web page showing the status of all its online applications after a worldwide outage locked people out of their e-mail for 2 1/2 to four hours. Last month's problems were so severe that Google even gave service credits to businesses and organizations that subscribe to a premium version of its e-mail program.

The service updates, available at <http://www.google.com/appsstatus> , disclose problems even if the outages involve fewer than 10 people. But Google makes it difficult to know precisely how many people actually

are affected because the Internet leader steadfastly refuses to give those specifics.

By making it easier for the public to see when there's a problem, Google also has made it easier for bloggers and reporters to write about the trouble.

Other major providers of free e-mail services aren't as transparent about their outages.

[Microsoft](#) Corp. offers a help center with a community board where users can report problems.

A quick check of that board late Wednesday found numerous complaints about Microsoft's e-mail service being unavailable, with some users asserting they had been cut off from their accounts for three days. Microsoft responded with a post that the service was having "login issues."

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