

Google glitch disrupts search engine, e-mail

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Google logo

(AP) -- Millions of people were cut off from Google Inc.'s search engine, e-mail and other online services Thursday, sparking a flurry of frustrated venting that served as a reminder of society's growing dependence on Google's technology.

The Mountain View-based company blamed the trouble on a glitch that routed too much of its traffic through computers in Asia, overwhelming its system so badly that about 14 percent of its users encountered problems with the Internet's most popular search engine. The mistake also affected Google's e-mail and several other services.

The outages began about 10:48 a.m. EDT and lasted for about an hour, according to Urs Hoelzle, Google's senior vice president of operations.

Google's problems rippled around the Web because other sites rely on its analytics service and also draw much of their traffic from searches done

through Google.

Many Web sites took twice as long to load and were twice as likely to fail during Google's disruption, according to Gomez Inc., which helps Internet companies manage their applications.

"We've been working hard to make our services ultrafast and 'always on,' so it's especially embarrassing when a glitch like this one happens," Hoelzle wrote on Google's blog. "We're very sorry that it happened, and you can be sure that we'll be working even harder to make sure that a similar problem won't happen again."

Before the repair, many people locked out from Google went elsewhere on the Internet to express their dismay and despair.

Multiple messages posted on Twitter, a popular information-sharing forum, indicated that people all over the world had trouble with the Google search engine and e-mail. But other Twitter users said their Google services have been running smoothly.

Because Google is used by hundreds of millions of people, even a breakdown affecting a small percentage of its audience can have a huge impact. Google's search engine, by far the most popular on the Internet, fields more than 9 billion monthly search requests in the United States alone.

As part of its effort to retain its current users and expand its market share so it can sell more Internet ads, Google has invested billions of dollars to create a vast network of computers to lessen the chances of breakdowns.

Although its search engine is renowned for its reliability, Google isn't fail-safe. Its 5-year-old e-mail service, in particular, has been susceptible

to periodic outages.

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