

Saved by smartphones? Sites stay up despite spike

May 3 2011, By JORDAN ROBERTSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- News of Osama bin Laden's death caused traffic to increase at popular U.S. news sites. Yet outages and slowdowns were less severe than during major news events in the past, meaning fewer people were stuck staring at error messages.

Two likely reasons? Smartphones and the [royal wedding](#) in Britain.

Dave Karow, a manager with Keynote Systems Inc., a San Mateo, Calif.-based company that monitors [Internet traffic](#), said that smartphones helped spread the pain of throngs of people trying to view the same [news sites](#) at once. Smartphones typically deliver slimmed-down versions of the regular Web pages, which reduces the load on the sites.

Last week's wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton may have also helped because many news organizations upgraded their Internet infrastructure, anticipating huge page views. Some of the extra capacity, which often can be increased or decreased based on a site's needs, may still have been in place.

Karow said that of the largest news outlets tracked by Keynote, only about a third experienced significant delays. But those delays were resolved quickly, a change from earlier news events that caused an immediate spike in traffic, such as Michael Jackson's death in 2009.

The average slowdown for regular Web sites was about five seconds,

while for mobile sites it was less than three seconds, Keynote said.

"It wasn't like sites were completely cratered for hours," Karow said. "Within an hour, most sites were in pretty darn good condition and were serving pages pretty darn well. But it was within that first hour when they were seeing the most stress."

The crush of online traffic did cause some problems. Visitors to The [New York Times](#) site who were not already logged in could not access articles for about 30 minutes, as the site coped with an unprecedented surge in volume.

CNN.com reported 88 million page views between the time the news broke late Sunday and 1 p.m. Monday. That's more than three times what it normally gets during that time. MSNBC.com said its page views were 38 percent higher than on an average Sunday. ABC [News](#) said its website and wireless applications had its largest hour of traffic in history from 11 p.m. to midnight Sunday.

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