

Santa being tracked by Microsoft and Google

December 4 2013



A young boy looks at the website (www.noradsanta.org) to check on the progress of Santa Claus on December 24, 2009 in Washington, DC.

The competition between Microsoft and Google is stretching to the North Pole as the Internet search rivals vie to be top Santa tracker this Christmas.

Google on Wednesday launched a google.com/santatracker website offering reindeer games, elf antics and updates on beloved gift-giver

Kris Kringle as children worldwide count down to Christmas eve.

"A team of Google engineers are working hard to track Santa's sleigh with the most advanced maps and holiday technology available," self-titled Elf Creative Director Sandy Russell said in a blog post.

Google has crafted software to involve Android-powered devices and its Chrome web browsers in on the Claus tracking action.

"Use your phone for on-the-go flight practice with the elves or cozy up near the fireplace with your tablet to follow Santa around the world as he delivers presents Christmas Eve," Russell said.

"If you have Chromecast, cast from the Santa Tracker Android app to explore the Village or track his route right from your TV."

Meanwhile, Microsoft teamed with North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD) to create a Santa Tracker powered by the organization's global radar system and technology such as Bing Maps and Windows software.

Colorado-based NORAD is a combined US and Canadian command center that works to "defend North America" by watching the skies and seas for threats.

"Since we're watching the skies anyway, it only makes sense to watch for Rudolph as well," said NORAD Tracks Santa project manager Marisa Novobilski.

NORAD's tradition of Santa tracking began in 1955, after a US retail chain's newspaper ad inviting children to telephone Mr. Claus mistakenly listed a phone number reserved for emergency US air defense situations.

A colonel on duty played along for the sake of children callers, and "it became the goodwill military outreach program it is today," Novobilski said.

This is the first time NORAD has teamed with Microsoft, which is helping power a noradsanta.org website featuring games, video and more.

"Once upon a time, children would have to take their parents' word that Santa Claus was on his way (but will only stop at their house if they go to sleep already)," US-based Microsoft said.

"Now, using a website, a mobile app, or by placing a phone call to NORAD, [children](#) can determine Santa Claus's approximate global position.

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Citation: Santa being tracked by Microsoft and Google (2013, December 4) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-12-santa-tracked-microsoft-google.html>

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