

Facebook cracks down on groups spreading harmful information

April 10 2019, by Barbara Ortutay And Rachel Lerman



In this Jan. 9, 2019, file photo, media and guests tour Facebook offices in Cambridge, Mass., building. Facebook says it is rolling out a wide range of updates aimed at combatting the spread of false and harmful information on the social media site. (AP Photo/Elise Amendola, File)

Facebook said Wednesday it is rolling out a wide range of updates aimed

at combatting the spread of false and harmful information on the social media site—stepping up the company's fight against misinformation as it faces growing outside pressure.

The updates will limit the visibility of links found to be significantly more prominent on Facebook than across the web as a whole. The company is also expanding its fact-checking program with outside expert sources, including The Associated Press, to vet videos and other material posted on Facebook.

Facebook groups—the [online communities](#) that many point to as lightning rods for the spread of fake information—will also be more closely monitored. If they are found to be spreading misinformation, their visibility in users' news feeds will be limited.

Lawmakers and [human rights groups](#) have been critical of the company for the spread of extremism and misinformation on its flagship site and on Instagram.

During a larger hearing Tuesday on the spread of white nationalism, congress members questioned a company representative about how Facebook prevents violent material from being uploaded and shared on the site.

In a separate Senate subcommittee hearing Wednesday, the company is expected to be asked about allegations that social media companies are biased against conservatives.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg's latest vision for Facebook, with an emphasis on private, encrypted messaging , is sure to pose a challenge for the company when it comes to removing problematic material.

Guy Rosen, Facebook's vice president of integrity, acknowledged the

challenge in a meeting with reporters at Facebook's Menlo Park, California, headquarters Wednesday. He said striking a balance between protecting people's privacy and [public safety](#) is "something societies have been grappling for centuries."

Rosen said the company is focused on making sure it does the best job possible "as Facebook evolves toward private communications." But he offered no specifics.

"This is something we are going to be working on, working with experts outside the [company](#)," he said, adding that the aim is "to make sure we make really informed decisions as we go into this process."

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