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Amazon.com experiences hours-long outage

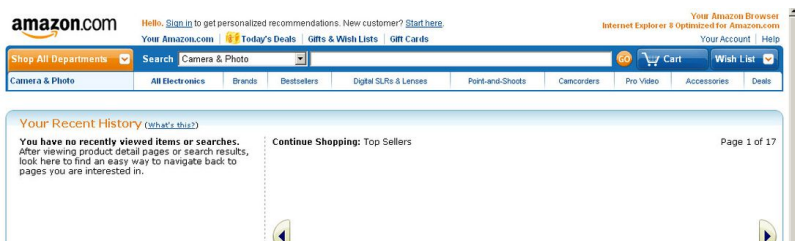
Online retailer experiences an unusually long outage that frustrates customers by displaying blank product pages and empty shopping carts.



Declan McCullagh



June 29, 2010 7:23 p.m. PT





Amazon.com experienced a widespread outage on Tuesday that lasted, at least for many customers, more than three hours and displayed blank or partial pages instead of product listings.

By mid-afternoon, Amazon's home page was devoid of any product photographs and showed only a list of categories on the left of the screen. Searching for items often didn't work, and customers' shopping carts and saved item lists were temporarily displayed as empty.

At an annual revenue of nearly \$27 billion, Amazon faces a potential loss of an average of \$51,400 a minute when its site is offline. Amazon shares closed down 7.8 percent, a sharper fall than the Nasdaq index.

A post on an Amazon seller community forum at 12:47 p.m. PDT said: "We are currently experiencing an issue that is impacting customers' ability to place orders on the Amazon.com website." A followup announcement an hour later said the problem had not been resolved.

An Amazon spokesperson did not respond to questions from CNET. The site seemed to be acting normally by around 5 p.m. PDT.

Twitter lit up with reports of the outage, and the #amazonfail tag was resurrected. One wag offered this advice: "Amazon is down. Retreat to your bunkers. Arm yourselves. Remember that cannibalism is a good way to prevent potential zombies."

One reason why customers seemed so surprised is that Amazon's Web site is known for its reliability. It had an hour outage in 2006, a 30-minute outage in 1999, and a 90-minute outage in 2008--a better-than-average record for such a well-trafficked shopping destination.

The outage didn't seem to affect Amazon's Web services. A company dashboard showed that those services were operating normally.

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