

## NEWS

## Facebook Outage Silences 150,000 Users



By Brennon Slattery

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For the past week and a half, several thousand Facebook users were unable to access their accounts because of a technical issue with a server. The outage silenced .05 percent of Facebook users, or 150,000 people, which may not seem like that many, considering that [Facebook now has over 300 million users](#). But if this could happen to even a small percentage, what's to say it couldn't happen again to even more users of the [world's largest social networking site](#)?

The affected Facebook users are slowly seeing their accounts restored, though some profile data may have been lost. Facebook itself was silent on the matter until yesterday, when [it gave CNET the skinny](#), saying the issue was caused by "a technical issue with a single database." Facebook also iterated that it had nothing to with "hackers or other malicious activity."

Facebook spokeswoman Brandee Barker gave a boilerplate statement that included the usual apologies and assurances that the outage would be repaired as soon as possible. "Our engineering team has worked around the clock, and as of [October 12], all of these users should begin to regain access to their Facebook accounts."

According to CNET, affected users also received this message: "You may not have been able to access your account over the last several days. We're sorry for this inconvenience; an extended technical issue affected a small number of Facebook accounts, including yours. We have done our best to restore your account to its most recent state, but some data and settings may not be current. In order to be cautious, we defaulted some of your privacy settings to their most restrictive settings. You may wish to review your privacy settings and reset them." As you see, Facebook was not specific as to what "some data and settings" actually includes.

It doesn't sound as though the data and update loss were catastrophic or anything more than just annoying. However, the outage highlights the potential fragility of Facebook. If one server fail can affect 150,000 people, what would happen if three servers crashed? Paranoid thoughts, perhaps, but as Facebook grows and becomes more integrated with ordinary

people's lives and with businesses and corporations, the security of the site becomes a public matter of great importance.

That this server failure wasn't widely reported is also distressing. Facebook should be more upfront with its technical difficulties and, in light of this incident, once again bolster security measures not only to decrease the likelihood of reoccurrence, but also to keep the more crucial meat of people's profiles away from exposure.

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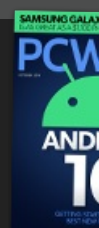
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