# Crowdstrike and Microsoft: What we know about global IT outage

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EPA

There were long lines at Barcelona airport, as passengers waited to be checked in manually

A mass IT outage has caused travel chaos around the world, with banking and healthcare services also badly hit.

Many flights have been grounded, with queues and delays at airports.

Cyber-security firm Crowdstrike has admitted that the problem was caused by an update to its Falcon antivirus software, designed to protect Microsoft Windows devices from malicious attacks.

Microsoft has said it is taking "mitigation action" to deal with "the lingering impact" of the outage.

Here is a summary of what else we know so far.
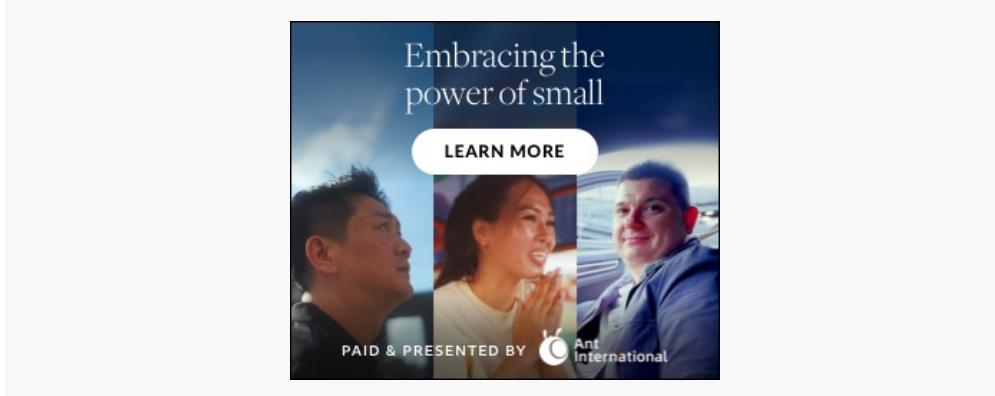
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# What caused the outage?

The problems were caused by a "defect" in a "content update" for Microsoft Windows devices, the boss of global cyber-security firm Crowdstrike, George Kurtz, said.

He added: "The issue has been identified, isolated and a fix has been deployed."

Mr Kurtz said the issues did not affect other operating systems, adding: "This is not a security incident or cyber-attack."

His statement followed widespread reports that Crowdstrike, which producers antivirus software, had issued a software update that caused Windows devices to crash.

Crowdstrike shares plunged as much as 21% in early pre-market trade. Microsoft also lost ground, as did travel and leisure stocks, as investors weighed the potential disruption for holidaymakers.
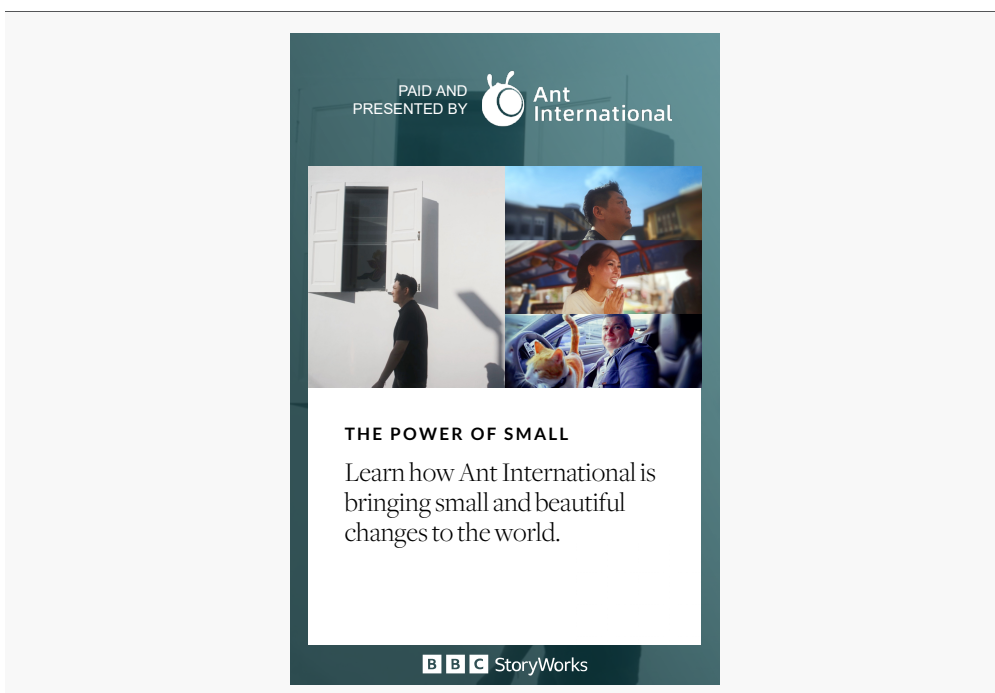
# When will it be fixed?

It could be some time.

Crowdstrike's Mr Kurtz, speaking to NBC News, said it was the firm's "mission" to make sure every one of its customers recovered completely from the outage.

But he added that this would not happen automatically and "it could be some time" before everything was up and running as before.

"We're deeply sorry for the impact that we've caused to customers, to travellers, to anyone affected by this, including our companies," he said.

Crowdstrike has issued its fix. But according to those in the know, it will have to be applied separately to each and every device affected.

Every machine will require a manual reboot in safe mode - causing a massive headache for IT departments everywhere.

# What's the solution?

Microsoft is advising people to try a classic method to get things working - turning it off and on again - in some cases up to 15 times.

<u>The tech giant said this has worked</u> for some users of virtual machines – PCs where the computer is not in the same place as the screen.

"Several reboots (as many as 15 have been reported) may be required, but overall feedback is that reboots are an effective troubleshooting step at this stage," it said.

It is also telling customers with more in-depth computing knowledge that they should delete a certain file - the same solution one CrowdStrike employee has been sharing on social media.

But this fix is intended for experts and IT professionals, not regular users.

# Which airports have been affected?

The problems have emerged across the world, but was first noticed in Australia, and possibly felt most severely in the **air travel** industry.

- There are delays at UK airports, with long queues reported at London's **Stansted** and **Gatwick**.

- **Ryanair** said it had been "forced to cancel a small number of flights today (19 July)" and advised passengers to log-on to their Ryanair account, once it was back online, to see what their options are.

- **British Airways** also cancelled several flights.

- Several US airlines, notably **United**, **Delta** and **American Airlines**, grounded their flights around the globe. Australian carriers **Virgin Australia** and **Jetstar** also had to delay or cancel flights as departure screens went blank at Sydney airport.

- Airports in **Tokyo**, **Amsterdam** and **Delhi** also said services had been affected.

Meanwhile, the problems have also hit trains, payment systems and healthcare providers.

- UK **railway companies** reported delays and said they were experiencing "widespread IT issues".
- **Payment systems** - many shops could only take cash. In the UK, supermarkets including **Morrisons** and **Waitrose** spent the morning unable to accept contactless payments. It was the same in Australian supermarkets including **Woolworths** and **Coles**, while financial institutions such as the **National Australia Bank** were also affected.
- **Healthcare** - Israel said 15 hospitals had switched to manual processes, although this did not affect medical treatment. Ambulances were told to take new cases to other hospitals. In the UK, some **doctors' surgeries in England** reported issues with booking appointments.

As the full extent of the disruption became clear, more firms and institutions started reporting problems.

- The US state of **Alaska** warned that its emergency services were affected.
- Broadcasters were also caught up in the chaos, including **Sky News** in the UK, which spent several hours off air.
- The **London Stock Exchange** said it was working as normal, but there were issues with its news service, used by companies to report market-sensitive information in a timely way.
- And Poland's largest container terminal, the **Baltic Hub** in the northern city of **Gdansk**, said the outage was "hampering terminal operations" and asked companies not to send containers to the port.

# What is Crowdstrike?

This tech disaster is a reminder of the complexity of our modern digital infrastructure that Crowdstrike, a company that's not exactly a household name, can be at the heart of such worldwide disarray.

The US firm, based in Austin, Texas, is a listed company on the US stock exchange, featuring in both the S&P 500 and the high-tech Nasdaq indexes.

Like a lot of modern technology companies, it hasn't been around that long. It was founded a mere 13 years ago, but has grown to employ nearly 8,500 people.

As a provider of cyber-security services, it tends to get called in to deal with the aftermath of hack attacks.

It has been involved in investigations of several high-profile cyber-attacks, such as when Sony Pictures had its computer system hacked in 2014.

But this time, because of a flawed update to its software, a firm that is normally part of the solution to IT problems has instead caused it.

In its last earnings report, Crowdstrike declared a total of nearly 24,000 customers. That's an indication not just of the size of the issue, but also the difficulties that could be involved in fixing it.

Each of those customers is a huge organisation in itself, so the number of individual computers affected is hard to estimate.

*Additional reporting by Imran Rahman-Jones, Liv McMahon and Tiffany Wertheimer.*

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