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# BlackBerry Outage Felt Across N. America

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NEW YORK -- Most of it happened outside "work" hours, but the nature of mobile e-mail meant plenty of dismay as BlackBerry service went down across North America from Tuesday evening to Wednesday morning.

By the time the service sputtered back to life, jamming the handheld devices with a torrent of delayed messages, grumbles had been heard at the highest levels of business and government.

"The sound of BlackBerries being thrown against the desk was deafening for a while," said Garth Turner, a member of the Canadian Parliament known for his constant Internet blogging.

"Because it has become the de facto channel of communications around this place, it actually impacts on the government of Canada and the work of the whole House of Commons."

BlackBerry was also the first order of business at a White House Press briefing Wednesday morning.

"I apologize to a number of you who tried e-mailing over the last 14 hours," White House spokesman Tony Fratto told reporters.

"We're 14 hours into no BlackBerry, so you can imagine how things are," he said. "We've already started a 12-step group."

Research in Motion Ltd., the Canadian company that provides the devices and e-mail service, confirmed the outage Wednesday morning, but disclosed no details about the cause.

The outage cut off incoming and outgoing e-mail on BlackBerry devices regardless of which cellular company a user buys the service from, indicating the problem originated at RIM's network data center in Canada.

That facility serves as a hub for RIM's North American traffic, routing messages between the roughly 8 million BlackBerry devices now in use and the various sources of e-mail, from private corporate servers to Web-based accounts like Yahoo and AOL.

The outage reverberated on Wall Street, too. RIM's share price slid at Wednesday's open, but recovered and rallied -- suggesting, perhaps, that a product that can provoke this much consternation holds an enviable position against emerging challenges from the likes of Microsoft Corp., Motorola Inc. and Nokia Corp.

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The stock rose \$3.10, or 2.4 percent, to close at \$134.37 in Wednesday trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market despite falling as low as \$128.80 in the opening minutes.

BlackBerry outages have been rare, although minor glitches occasionally cause delays in RIM's ability to deliver e-mail in real-time -- perhaps the most important feature of the service for many users. The last two major disruptions appear to have occurred nearly two years ago, both in June 2005.

Nevertheless, even one outage is unbearable for some. While many people rely heavily on the device as a lifeline when they're away from their computers, even more have simply grown accustomed, occasionally obsessive, about being able to check their e-mail at night and on weekends.

"It's been most inconvenient," said Dacrie Brooks, a public relations professional attending the annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters in Las Vegas. "I've been using (my BlackBerry) for all my communications because I don't have access to my laptop between meetings."

"It's been a challenging day because I'm missing things left and right. That's not fun."

The outage also was mentioned Wednesday morning during a conference call with the chief financial officer of JPMorgan, Michael J. Cavanagh, to discuss the bank's quarterly earnings, with the CFO noting that his device was still on the blink.

Other users shrugged at the disruption.

"My life wasn't affected in any serious way by the outage," said Dimitri Vorontzov, a courtship instructor for the personal coaching service Charisma Arts, noting that he's usually near a computer to fetch his e-mail anyway. "If you didn't tell me, I wouldn't have really noticed."

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