

Facebook wants to keep you 'in-the-know' about emergencies, active shooters in your area

August 27 2019, by Dalvin Brown, Usa Today



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

While Facebook isn't an actual news organization, its flexing its ability to reach users faster than local news channels in some time-sensitive cases.

Starting on Tuesday, Facebook is rolling out a new tool to help alert you and your neighbors of unsafe conditions like active shooters in your area. It's like the [social networking](#) version of your smartphone's emergency alerts system, which notifies you about Amber Alerts and flood warnings in your town.

Facebook tested out its new local alerts tool in select cities over the past year. Now the tech giant is making the tool available to city governments and first responders nationwide so they can let users in a specific area know about potential threats.

After a year-long test run in select cities, Facebook's local alerts tool is being opened up to anyone with a Page associated with city governments, emergency management agencies and first responders starting on Tuesday.

"When authorities mark posts as local alerts, we greatly amplify their reach so that people living in an affected community are much more likely to see them," Facebook said in a blogpost. "We send notifications to people living in the affected area," and you'll see the local alert indicator next to that post in your News Feed.

So far, cops and local authorities have used the alerts to tell the public about flash flood warnings, mandatory evacuations, missing people reports, water main breaks, active shooters, road closures, winter storms, extreme temperature warnings, bomb threats and many more.

To test the tool's efficiency, Facebook conducted a survey of 2,000 users who had noticed the local alerts. The app found that 73% reported the posts provided new information they hadn't yet seen on the [news](#) or anywhere else.

This comes on the heels of Facebook's decision to hire a "small team" of

journalists to curate its upcoming News Tab that's set to begin testing later this year. A 2018 Pew Research Study found that 1 in 5 U.S. adults gets news from [social media](#), slightly higher than the share who often get information from print newspapers.

If you want the ability to send local alerts to people in your area, you just have to fill out a form and Facebook will notify you when it has expanded to your region.

The social network already has a check-in feature for use during such events as natural disasters, mass shootings, or other local or regional crisis situations. Safety Check works by sending users a push notification asking them if they are safe.

(c)2019 U.S. Today

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Facebook wants to keep you 'in-the-know' about emergencies, active shooters in your area (2019, August 27) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-08-facebook-in-the-know-emergencies-shooters-area.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--