

Facebook feature lets people reach out for help in pandemic

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Facebook's "community help" feature for emergencies will be activated to enable users to offer or receive help locally during the coronavirus pandemic

Facebook on Tuesday activated a feature allowing people impacted by the coronavirus pandemic to reach out for help from their community.

The Community Help feature was added to the social network four years ago as a way to find shelter, food or supplies during [natural disasters](#), and this week added the COVID-19 crisis to that list.

"We've been seeing since the beginning people asking for help," Facebook app head Fidji Simo told AFP.

"We've been working for a couple of weeks at enabling the feature."

While Community Help has been activated for tragedies such as the recent Australian wildfires, this time the feature reaches far beyond a single country and had to be woven into the coronavirus information hub, according to Simo.

Facebook set the help radius by default to 50 miles in the US and 100 kilometers in other countries, but people can scale back the area in which they are available to be of assistance.

"You can adjust it down if you can only help in your neighborhood," Simo said.

The feature lets Facebook users request or offer help from walking dogs or fetching groceries to psychotherapy.

People wishing to help support coronavirus relief efforts can donate money through a UN-Facebook fundraiser, with Facebook matching donations up to a total of \$10 million.

The leading online social network said it was adding a way to find and donate to local fundraising campaigns.

"Since the beginning of the spread of the virus and especially as people started practicing social distancing, we've seen them turn to Facebook to

connect with and take action to help their communities," Facebook said.

The California-based internet giant also said it was continuing to ramp up efforts to provide reliable, timely information about the pandemic and ways to take action.

Since a COVID-19 Information Center launched two weeks ago at Facebook, more than a billion people have been showed notifications about resources from health authorities through the hub and "educational pop-up" notifications at the social network and Instagram.

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