

TikTok scrambles to remove suicide video clips, ban users

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This Feb. 25, 2020, file photo, shows the icon for TikTok in New York. TikTok says it's working to remove videos of a man apparently taking his own life and banning users that keep trying to spread the clips on the wildly popular social media platform, it was reported on Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020. (AP Photo/File)

TikTok says it's working to remove videos of a man apparently taking his own life and banning users that keep trying to spread the clips on the popular social media platform.

It's the latest example of the ongoing struggle by big tech companies to police their platforms for harmful content amid increasing pressure from regulators.

The video was originally livestreamed on Facebook before being circulated on other platforms including TikTok, the company said.

It didn't not give more details about the video but news reports say it has been circulating on TikTok since Sunday and shows a man shooting himself with a gun.

"Our systems, together with our moderation teams, have been detecting and blocking these clips for violating our policies against content that displays, praises, glorifies, or promotes suicide," TikTok said in a statement.

"We are banning accounts that repeatedly try to upload clips," the company said, adding it appreciated users who reported the content.

TikTok has become very popular with teens largely because of the company's algorithms, which decide what videos users see without first requiring them to follow other users or specify their preferences. President Donald Trump has ordered Tiktok's Chinese owner ByteDance to sell its U.S. operations over concerns about cybersecurity and censorship.

Facebook said it removed the original video last month on the day it was streamed and has "used automation technology to remove copies and uploads since that time."

Social media users have been warning others about the clips, saying some have been edited to include shots of cats to trick viewers. Others are posting screenshot of the video's beginning to make people aware of what clips to avoid.

TikTok urged people who were struggling with thoughts of suicide or concerned about someone who is to seek support.

It comes days after another social media controversy over a live death. Facebook on Saturday blocked live broadcasts from a chronically ill bed-ridden man who who wanted to show what he expects will be a painful end to his life and had appealed to French President Emmanuel Macron for a medically-assisted death.

Separately on Tuesday, TikTok signed up to the European Union's [Code of Conduct](#) aimed at preventing and countering illegal hate speech online, officials said.

"It's good that #TikTok, a company favoured by young users who are particularly vulnerable to online abuse & illegal hate speech, joined the Code of Conduct," EU Commissioner Vera Jourova tweeted. "Of course, I expect TikTok to adhere not only to (the) Code's principles but also fully respect EU law when operating on EU soil."

The EU launched the code in 2016, but the problem has only grown since then, with social media companies accused of amplifying divisions, hate and misinformation on their platforms.

Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube were the first to sign up to the code when it launched, and Instagram, SnapChat and Dailymotion join last year.

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