

# AT&T says the outage to its US cellphone network was not caused by a cyberattack

February 23 2024, by Michelle Chapman

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FILE -- A cellular phone tower is shown on Monday, May 22, 2017 in High Ridge, Mo. A number of Americans are dealing with cellular outages Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, on AT&T, Cricket Wireless, Verizon, T-Mobile and other service providers, according to data from Downdetector. Credit: AP Photo/Jeff Roberson

AT&T said the hourslong outage to its U.S. cellphone network Thursday appeared to be the result of a technical error, not a malicious attack.

The [outage knocked out cellphone service](#) for thousands of its users across the U.S. starting early Thursday before it was restored.

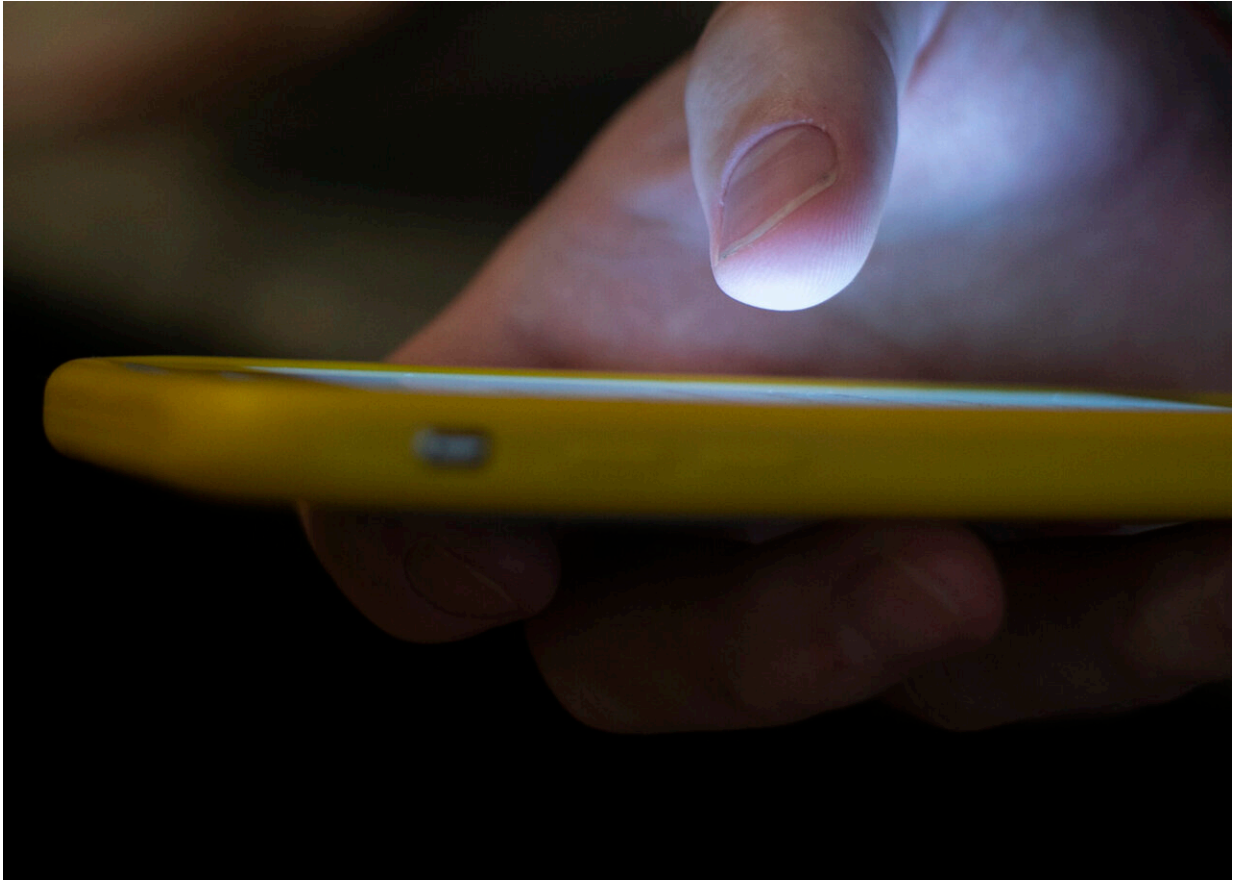
AT&T blamed the incident on an error in coding, without elaborating.

"Based on our initial review, we believe that today's outage was caused by the application and execution of an incorrect process used as we were expanding our network, not a [cyber attack](#)," the Dallas-based company said.

Outage tracker Downdetector noted that outages, which began at about 3:30 a.m. ET, peaked at around 73,000 reported incidents. AT&T had more than 58,000 outages around noon ET, in locations including Houston, Atlanta and Chicago. The carrier is the country's largest, with more than 240 million subscribers.

By 9 p.m. ET, the reports on AT&T's network were fewer than 1,000.

Cricket Wireless, which is owned by AT&T, had more than 9,000 outages at one point but the reports had also tailed off later in the afternoon. Users of other carriers, including Verizon and T-Mobile, also reported issues but those companies said their networks were operating normally and the problems were likely stemming from customers trying to connect to AT&T users.



A man uses a cell phone in New Orleans on Aug. 11, 2019. A number of Americans are dealing with cellular outages on AT&T, Cricket Wireless, Verizon, T-Mobile and other service providers, according to data from Downdetector, Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024. Credit: AP Photo/Jenny Kane, File



An AT&T retail location is shown in Willow Grove, Pa., Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024. A number of Americans are dealing with cellular outages on AT&T, Cricket Wireless, Verizon, T-Mobile and other service providers, according to data from Downdetector, Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024. AT&T, who was the hardest hit, is actively working to restore service to all of its customers. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Rourke



A woman looks at her phone while watching the sun set as triple-digit heat indexes continue in the Midwest Sunday, Aug. 20, 2023, in Kansas City, Mo. A number of Americans on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, are dealing with cellular outages on AT&T, Cricket Wireless, Verizon, T-Mobile and other service providers, according to data from Downdetector. AT&T, who was the hardest hit, is actively working to restore service to all of its customers. Credit: AP Photo/Charlie Riedel, File





A Verizon retail location is shown in Willow Grove, Pa., Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024. A number of Americans are dealing with cellular outages on AT&T, Cricket Wireless, Verizon, T-Mobile and other service providers, according to data from DOWNDetector, Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Rourke

During the outage, some iPhone users saw SOS messages displayed in the status bar on their cellphones. The message indicates that the device is having trouble connecting to their cellular provider's network, but it can make emergency calls through other carrier networks, according to Apple Support.

The Federal Communications Commission contacted AT&T about the outage and the Department of Homeland Security and FBI were also

looking into it, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

The FBI acknowledged it had been in touch with AT&T. "Should we learn of any malicious activity we will respond accordingly," the agency said.

The outage also raised concerns on Capitol Hill.

"We are working to assess today's disruption in order to gain a complete understanding of what went wrong and what can be done to prevent future incidents like this from occurring," said a statement issued by Cathy McMorris Rodgers, a Washington Republican who chairs the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Ohio Republican Bob Latta, chair of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee.

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Citation: AT&T says the outage to its US cellphone network was not caused by a cyberattack (2024, February 23) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2024-02-att-outage-cellphone-network-cyberattack.html>

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