

Amazon EC2 outage downs Reddit, Quora

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SCVNGR and other sites took to Twitter after a rare and major outage of Amazon's cloud-based Web service.

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By [Julianne Pepitone](#), staff reporter April 21, 2011: 5:37 PM ET

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- A rare and major outage of Amazon's cloud-based Web service on Thursday took down a plethora of other online sites, including Reddit, HootSuite, Foursquare and Quora.

The outages began Thursday morning just before 5 a.m. ET and were still ongoing more than 12 hours later. In a series of running updates on its Web services "[Health Dashboard](#)," Amazon described its efforts to recover from the cascade of problems kicked off by an early-morning "networking event."

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Amazon ([AMZN](#), [Fortune 500](#)) hosts many major websites on its web servers through a service called EC2. The "elastic" infrastructure model is designed to scale up automatically to handle giant traffic spikes -- the kind Amazon gets every year during its December e-commerce rush.

Thursday's crash happened at Amazon's northern Virginia data center, one of five global sites that underpin EC2. In its status log, Amazon said that the networking glitch caused many of its storage volumes to create new backups of themselves. That filled up Amazon's

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available storage capacity and kicked off a series of connectivity problems.

"A number of people have asked us for an ETA on when we'll be fully recovered," Amazon wrote early Thursday afternoon, nearly 10 hours after the outages began. "Our high-level ballpark right now is that the ETA is a few hours. We can assure you that all-hands are on deck to recover as quickly as possible."

Thousands of customers [hitch a ride on Amazon's cloud](#), renting space on its servers. Some of them went down Thursday in the wake of Amazon's outage.

Who was crashed: Q&A site [Quora](#) posted on its homepage: "We'll be back shortly, we hope. Sorry - it sucks for us too. We'd point fingers, but we wouldn't be where we are today without EC2."

News aggregator Reddit had resumed some functionality by midday, but it still noted on its homepage that "Amazon is experiencing a degradation...We are still waiting on them to get to our volumes."

Foursquare suffered some glitches earlier in the day, but its site seemed to be functioning normally by early afternoon.

Another location-based service, SCVNGR, [tweeted](#): "The sky is falling! Amazon's cloud seems to be down (raining?) so we're experiencing some issues too. Be back soon!"

Popular Twitter client HootSuite posted its avian-inspired "homepage down" message: "Owls need a break sometimes too. We'll be back in action shortly -- in the meantime go outside and flap your arms around, you may find that flying ain't very easy."

Jason Glassberg, co-founder of security outfit Casaba LLC, called the issue "a big ol' black eye" for Amazon.

"Reliability is probably *the* No. 1 concern with cloud services," he said. "Amazon has worked long and hard to convince folks that their services were robust. This does not help the cause." ■

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