

Facebook offers 'safety check' for disaster areas

WASHINGTON, USA: Facebook has unveiled a "safety check" tool to allow users to alert friends and family about their status in emergencies, a system it developed after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan.



Facebook has unveiled new software, based on the location of the device, that asks for a status update and allows the user to click a button with a message saying "I'm safe" or similar and send it to all their friends and family. Image: [Red Cross](#)

"We want to provide a tool that people can use when major disasters strike, so we've created 'safety check' - a simple and easy way to say you're safe and check on others," Facebook wrote in a blog last week.

Facebook said it began working on the system after the disaster in Japan: "During that crisis, we saw how people used technology and social media to stay connected with those they cared about," the statement said.

The new tool expands on its "disaster message board" used in Japan. In "safety check," users in areas affected by a disaster will get a notification asking "Are you OK?"

Users can select to click "I'm safe" and status updates will be sent to friends.

Facebook will use a user's smartphone location to determine if someone is affected by a catastrophe, while allowing people to correct any location mistakes.

"Unfortunately, these kinds of disasters happen all too frequently," Facebook said. "Each time, we see people, relief organisations and first responders turn to Facebook in the aftermath of a major natural disaster."

Facebook said the tool will be available globally on Android, iOS, feature phones and desktop computers.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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