



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 13, 2012

China Blocks Google Access for 12 Hours

Google reported a dramatic drop-off in its traffic to sites in China for about 12 hours Friday, November 9, into Saturday morning. According to Google's [Transparency Report](#), which monitors traffic to Google's sites around the world, all of its services were inaccessible in China, with Chinese Internet monitor [Greatfire.org](#) confirming the outage. "We've checked and there's nothing wrong on our end," a Google spokesperson e-mailed [Computerworld](#). Observers noted that the blockage coincided with the beginning of Communist China's 18th Party Congress, at which the government is expected to name new leaders.



China regularly blocks certain elements of the Google site to computers within the country, but this is the first time Google has been totally inaccessible since 2010, when there was a brief disruption in service. [PCWorld.com](#) noted that the latest outage occurred "just two weeks after Chinese censors targeted the *New York Times* after it had published an article on the billions in wealth amassed by the family of Chinese Premier Wen Jiaobao. The *New York Times'* website continues to be inaccessible from within the country."

According to PCWorld, the communist country "periodically increases the level of Internet censorship when sensitive government-related matters arise. This happened last year when an online call was made urging the Chinese people to protest. Subsequently, Google accused the Chinese government of disrupting access to its Gmail service in the country."

While Google's YouTube site has been largely blocked in China since 2009, said Internet observers, the latest disruption affected all of Google's core services, including Gmail, Google Docs, Google Maps, and its analytics service, which is used by tens of thousands of companies to track who comes to their sites.

[SciTechToday.com](#) noted that Google is the second-most-used search engine in China, behind the country's own Baidu.com, and is the fifth most accessed site among China's half-billion online users. But Google has been in an ongoing conflict with the Chinese government, dating back to 2010 when Google refused to comply with China's censorship regulations. When the Chinese government blocked user access to some Google sites, the company redirected users of local search engines to its sites in Hong Kong, which are not subject to the same restrictions imposed on China's mainland.

That same year Google reported that there had been attempts to hack into the Gmail accounts of Chinese human rights activists. According to SciTechToday.com, in June Google announced that it would display warnings to users in China in the event of search errors that were beyond the control of Google. "For years, Google said it has received complaints about some search requests that had led to 'this webpage is not available' or 'the connection was reset' error pages," reported the tech site. "Such pages often result in a temporary disconnection to Google."

GreatFire.org reported that during the disruption many Google subdomains were "DNS poisoned,"



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which it described as an attack method that redirects visitors to a typically non-existent website. Attempts by Internet users in China to reach Google.com resulted in a redirect that took them to a non-functioning Web address in Korea. “Never before have so many people been affected by a decision to block a website,” GreatFire said.

Earlier this year Google CEO Eric Schmidt predicted that China’s Internet firewall was destined to fall under increasing pressure from the country’s online users. He suggested that once China’s censorship policies are swept away, the resulting free-flow of information would result in dramatic political and social changes in the country.



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