



Being Alive

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*Social Security
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Demands Cuts to IT
Staff*

Social Security Website Keeps Crashing, as DOGE Demands Cuts to IT Staff

Lisa Rein, Hannah Natanson Elizabeth Dwoskin, Washington Post

Retirees and disabled people are facing chronic website outages and other access problems as they attempt to log in to their online Social Security accounts, even as they are being directed to do more of their business with the agency online.

The website has crashed repeatedly in recent weeks, with outages lasting anywhere from 20 minutes to almost a day, according to six current and former officials with knowledge of the issues. Even when the site is back online, many customers have not been able to sign into their accounts or have logged in only to find information missing. For others, access to the system has been slow, requiring repeated tries to get in.

The problems come as the Trump administration's cost-cutting team, led by Elon Musk, has imposed a downsizing that has led to 7,000 job cuts and is preparing to push out thousands more employees at an agency that serves 73 million Americans. The new demands from Musk's US DOGE Service include a 50 percent cut to the technology division responsible for the website and other electronic access.

Many of the network outages appear to be caused by an expanded fraud check system imposed by the DOGE team, current and former officials said. The technology staff did not test the new software against a high volume of users to see if the servers could handle the rush, these officials said.

The technology issues have been particularly alarming for some of the most vulnerable Social Security customers. For almost two days last week, for example, many of the 7.4 million adults and children receiving monthly benefits under the antipoverty program known as Supplemental Security

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Income, or SSI, confronted a jarring message that claimed they were “currently not receiving payments,” agency officials acknowledged in an internal email to staff.

The error messages set off widespread panic until recipients discovered that their monthly checks had still been deposited in their bank accounts. Another breakdown disabled the SSI system for much of the day on Friday, prompting claims staff to cancel appointments because they could not enter new disability claims in the system.

“Social Security’s response has been, ‘Oops,’” said Darcy Milburn, director of Social Security and healthcare policy at the Arc, a national nonprofit that advocates for people with disabilities. The group fielded dozens of calls last week from nervous clients who saw the inaccurate message and assumed their monthly check, usually paid on the first of the month, would not arrive.

“It’s woefully insufficient when we’re talking about a government agency that’s holding someone’s lifeline in their hands,” Milburn said.

The disruptions are occurring as acting commissioner Leland Dudek and the DOGE team move to lay off large swaths of the workforce in a new phase of downsizing. Thousands of employees already have been pushed out — many in customer-facing roles, others with expertise in the agency’s cumbersome technology systems. At least 800 of the 3,000 employees left in the division that manages all of the Social Security databases face layoffs, a senior official said on Friday. The newly named chief information officer, Scott Coulter, a Musk-aligned private equity analyst, has demanded a cut of 50 percent, the official said.

The network outages are one in a cascade of blows to customer service that also have hobbled phone systems and field office operations as the workforce shrinks.

A surge in visitors to the website is overwhelming the computer system as customers, nervous that the rapid changes at the agency will compromise their benefits, download their benefit and earnings statements and attempt to file claims. President Trump has said that his administration will not reduce Social Security benefits.

The chaos could accelerate starting April 14, when new identification measures are set to take effect that will require millions of customers applying for benefits to authenticate their identity online, part of the administration’s campaign to root out allegedly fraudulent claims.

“We’re just spiking like crazy,” said one senior official, who, like others in this article, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about agency operations. “It’s people who are terrified that DOGE is messing with our systems. It’s the sheer massive volume of freaked-out people.”

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The Social Security press office said in a statement that officials are “actively investigating the root cause” of the incidents, which they called “brief disruptions,” averaging about 20 minutes each with the exception of the SSI error message. But on several occasions, including during an outage last Monday, customers were shut out of the website for hours. The system was back online last Monday after two hours, but lingering issues lasted through the afternoon while all backlogged queries were processed, current and former officials said. And a system upgrade on a Saturday in late March took several hours longer than anticipated and knocked out the network.

Three times in a recent 10-day stretch, the online systems the field office staff rely on to serve the public have crashed, said one employee in an Indiana office.

The downed programs included tools employees use to schedule visits, to see who has booked an appointment, and to check who has arrived, the employee said.

Suddenly forced offline as they were taking claims, the staff members scribbled down clients’ information, then had to wait until later to load it into the computer, doubling or tripling the amount of time and work involved, the employee said.

In other instances, managers or security guards improvised a solution after the online scheduling system failed, the employee said. They walked out to the reception area, wrote down numbers on paper slips, and started handing them out to people waiting in line.

The network crashes appear to be caused by an expansion, initiated by the Trump team, of an existing contract with a credit-reporting agency that tracks names, addresses, and other personal information to verify customers’ identities. The enhanced fraud checks are now done earlier in the claims process and have resulted in a boost to the volume of customers who must pass the checks.

But the technology staff did not test the software against a high volume of users to see if the servers could handle the rush, current and former officials said. Connectivity issues and bugs with the expanded system have caused the portal that manages log-ins and authentication for many Social Security applications to go down, officials said.

At a weekly operations meeting on March 28 that was made public last week, Wayne Lemon, deputy chief information officer for infrastructure and IT operations, acknowledged the network crashes and said, “While they’ve been brief, we prefer no outages.” He said the outages were under investigation and may involve “challenges we’ve experienced with a number of partners.” Part of the problem may be that the outages have occurred during “high volume use of the network.”

“Is there a spike in demand or something in the environment causing the issues?” Lemon said.

Customers, meanwhile, are growing more frustrated.

In Upland, Calif., 72-year-old Kathy Stecher began trying to apply for retirement benefits more than a week ago. One of her first steps was to visit the Social Security website to book a required appointment at her local field office, because she believed she had to authenticate her identity in person first.

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But over several days stretching from last week through Wednesday, the website would not let Stecher schedule a visit. The site displayed a small bar reading, “Make an appointment,” she said, but whenever she clicked on it, nothing happened.

When she finally reached someone on the phone, the website’s booking tool was not working, she said. The employee sighed and told her that similar problems have become routine, forcing customers to wait on hold for hours. So much was changing so fast at the agency, the employee said.

In recent weeks, Robert Raniolo, 67, a retired financial analyst in New York, found himself stuck when he tried to update his emergency contact by designating his niece instead of his wife, who has dementia.

Since he began receiving retirement benefits five years ago, Raniolo has never missed a payment or had trouble getting online, he said. But this time he got an error message - and kept getting them. “Bad Request,” read one notification, according to a screenshot he provided to The Washington Post. “There has been an unexpected system error,” read another.

He was directed to try again during “regular service hours” on the East Coast.

So Raniolo kept trying - three to five times a day, every day, for the next five days. He tried at different times. He tried using his phone instead of his Chromebook. He tried different internet browsers: Chrome, Edge, DuckDuckGo.

Nothing worked. By last Monday evening, he still had not managed to get into his account to change his emergency contact.

He has begun to imagine the worst. What if something happens to him overnight, leaving his wife the only person authorized to communicate with Social Security on his behalf?

She probably would not know to call 911 if he collapsed on the floor, Raniolo said. She certainly would not understand how to manage or consider financial matters.

“If you were to call her right now, she wouldn’t know how to answer the phone,” Raniolo said. “That’s why it’s so frustrating to me I can’t make a simple transaction on the Social Security website.”

In Westborough, Mass., outside Boston, last Monday, Chris Hubbard checked the Facebook feed where the statewide community of parents of disabled children receiving SSI benefits post news and information and saw that a friend logging in to the Social Security website was notified that her child was not receiving benefits. Hubbard and her husband, Tom, have a profoundly autistic son. The monthly check to pay for the group home where he lives was ready to go into the mail the next morning, the first of the month, when his SSI check always hits his bank accounts. When Hubbard logged in, her son’s account also showed “no history of payments.”

“My mind was racing,” she recalled. She envisioned going through the agonizing process of reapplying for benefits for her son. She could not sleep and continued to check the website until 2:30 a.m. Same message.

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On Tuesday, the check had finally been deposited by 9 a.m. But the message, now clearly an error, was still up on the website until that afternoon. “The whole thing was very alarming,” Hubbard said.

Massachusetts Nurses with Brain Tumors: DPH “in communication” with Newton-Wellesley

Rick Sobey | Boston Herald

UPDATED: April 7, 2025 at 8:20 PM EDT

The state Department of Public Health is “in communication” with Newton-Wellesley Hospital after a reported [group of nurses were diagnosed with brain tumors](#).

The diagnosed nurses have worked at some point in the maternal care labor/delivery unit on [the hospital’s](#) fifth floor, according to hospital officials.

As of last week, 11 staff members had been interviewed by the Mass General Brigham Occupational Health Service. Five cases were determined to be brain tumors of three different types – all of which were benign (non-cancerous). The only type of benign tumor that had more than one case was meningioma.

Six cases were determined to not be brain tumors, but rather other health concerns.

Newton-Wellesley Hospital officials have been assuring staff and patients that there’s “no environmental risk” at the facility, while the Massachusetts Nurses Association said it’s still investigating the situation.

On Monday, the Herald reached out to the state Department of Public Health about the reported cluster. “The Department of Public Health is aware of this matter and is in communication with the hospital,” DPH said in a statement. “The hospital is conducting an internal investigation.”

Newton-Wellesley shared the findings of its investigation with DPH, according to a hospital spokesperson.

This situation at the Mass General Brigham facility was [first reported by WBZ](#).

After hospital officials learned of the reported brain tumors, they conducted an investigation with the Department of Occupational Health and Safety, Newton-Wellesley Safety Officer, radiation and pharmaceutical safety offices, and external environmental consultants.

“The investigation found no environmental risks which could be linked to the development of a brain tumor,” hospital officials said in a statement.

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“Based on these results, we can confidently reassure our dedicated team members at Mass General Brigham/Newton-Wellesley Hospital and all our patients that there is no environmental risk at our facility,” the officials added. “As always, the health and wellbeing of our staff, clinicians, and patients is our absolute top priority.”

Staff members have raised several concerns about this cluster of cases. The hospital addressed questions about whether brain tumor cases can be related to: wearing masks during the pandemic, the drinking water, use of x-rays, the pharmacy on the floor below, cleaning products, past renovations, or mold.

The Massachusetts Nurses Association’s division of health and safety, consisting of occupational health nurses, is investigating the situation.

“We do not have a specific number (of nurses) we are releasing now because we are still verifying diagnoses via medical records. We do not have a specific cause as we are still investigating,” a spokesperson for the union said in a statement.

“We brought this to the hospital in December to urge an investigation by MGB,” the union spokesperson added. “We have been in communication with NWH nurses about this regularly and specifically with nurses who are self-reporting.”

The union spokesperson said the investigation is focused on the maternity unit, though they have reports from other areas as well.

“We are engaging with the hospital about their inquiry,” the union spokesperson said. “They only spoke to a small number of nurses and their environmental testing was not comprehensive. The hospital cannot make this issue go away by attempting to provide a predetermined conclusion.”

MBTA Announces nonstop Train from Boston to NYC

Amerra Hammouda - Senior Staff Writer • April 1, 2025

Commuting between **Boston and New York**, just got a whole lot easier! The MBTA recently shared that it plans to launch a “**yellow line**” later this year. Due to the **300% increase in ridership** on inbound and outbound [Amtrak trains between Boston and Manhattan](#), MBTA plans to release a nonstop commuter rail connecting the two cities.

While the train would be owned and operated by the MBTA, New Yorkers and all can also board at Moynihan Train Hall.

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The initial phase of the roll out is slated to begin in August. Since the **tracks and trains are already established**, the onboarding is expected to be seamless. Phase one includes a **daily outbound and inbound train**, Monday through Friday. The inbound train departs from **South Station in Boston at 6 AM**, with an arrival time of 10 AM. The outbound train departs **Moynihan Train Hall at 6 PM** and arrives at 10 PM.

Unlike Amtrak, this commuter train **will not make stops along the Boston to Manhattan pipeline**, shaving about 30 minutes off the regular train trip.

We are delighted to introduce the MBTA Yellow Line. This project has been under wraps for nearly a decade, but somehow feels long overdue for Bostonians and New Yorkers. With shifting workforces, we've found that a large population of riders travel frequently between the two metropolises, with unreliable and expensive means to get there. They're often faced with awful traffic in either city. This will also be a way to help avoid the congestion fee proposals and reduce the extra charges. Our team is very excited to introduce this more modern fleet of MBTA trains, in a new color, that nods to both cities, the team noted in a recent interview.

This move will hopefully help the [city's traffic problem](#). Based on the demand and success of the initial trains, the MBTA notes it **could include weekend schedules** and more time slots for the weekdays. Tickets will be available on the **MBTA app or purchasable onboard with credit card only** and will be **\$32 each way**. Wi-fi will be on board as well.

MBTA, if you're seeing this, happy April Fools,' but can we make this a reality?

See also: [Amtrak Rolls Out \\$31 Rides Between Boston And Manhattan For 'Super Savers'](https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/03/12/donald-trump-pink-triangle-truth-social/)
<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/03/12/donald-trump-pink-triangle-truth-social/>

Edgar Cayce

Tuesday, April 8

"To the subconscious, there is no past or future - all present."

Edgar Cayce reading 136-54

Monday, April 7

"An ANSWER to every question is within the grasp of every soul. For they that seek, shall find, and they that knock, to them it shall be opened."

ECRL 1456-1

Sunday April 6

"LIFE itself is the expression of the Creative Force. That is eternity."

Edgar Cayce reading 1599-1

Saturday, April 5

"Stay close to nature, close to those activities in every form of exercise that breathes in the deep ozone and the beauty of nature. For you may breathe it into your own soul, as you would a sunset or a morning sun rising."

ECRL 3374-1

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