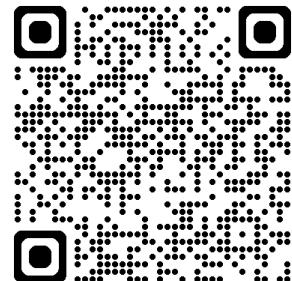


# How and why fake news floods social media after disasters



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20251215160053492/>

Authorities are also urging people not to fall for misinformation. Since last week's quake, fake news has been spreading rapidly online. Many posts were made using generative AI. This fake video is one example. It's been viewed more than 20,000 times on Tik-Tok, but both the newscaster and the alleged tsunami are completely fake. They were made using AI. The post was later deleted. Some videos also make wildly unscientific claims. This one falsely suggests solar flares could trigger a massive earthquake. It has been played more than 720,000 times on YouTube. The misinformation isn't limited to videos. A post claiming there would be an earthquake on December 8<sup>th</sup> was widely shared on X. Many commentators claim it foresaw last week's quake, but the account makes baseless earthquake predictions every day. Any overlap is purely a coincidence. AJAMA says scientifically, no one can predict an earthquake down to the exact date, place, and scale. It says anyone claiming they can is spreading false information. NHK World's Yabuuchi Junya has been following this phenomenon, and he joins me now in the studio. So Junya, why do people make these kinds of posts?

There are two big reasons why. For starters, some people just want the attention. During disasters, the public is desperate for information. It is a golden opportunity for those who want to get followers or responses. The other reason is for money. Right now, some social media sites have a profit system in place. On X for example, the more views a post gets, the more revenue the users can receive. That's why some people make fake news knowing that it will get a lot of attention. Some may even rely on direct scams. Often, they pretend to be disaster victims online to ask users for money.

Alright, so we mentioned some examples of fake news earlier. What have you been seeing?

Like you said, videos made using generative AI are everywhere. It is not a new trend, but it is changing. AI videos have been around for years. We've seen them used after disasters before, but they never looked so real. Until recently, it was relatively easy to identify a fake video. AI used to struggle with certain features and details, but the technology has improved rapidly. Now it is difficult to tell an AI video from a real one.

What should we do when we come across these fake posts?

The first thing is to remember is that these fakes prey on your emotions. Many people are on edge after a disaster, that makes it easy for these anxiety inducing posts to spread online. So, if you see a post that stirs up your emotions, stop and take a breath. Then look at who posted and what kind of things do they usually say. Remember that anyone can be fooled by fake news, especially AI videos. So, if you don't know where the information comes from, don't share it. When in doubt, look at what public institutions and trusted media are saying. That is the best way to fight back against fake news.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a friend.**

1. Have you ever been tricked by fake news? How did you find out it was fake?
2. Are AI videos more dangerous than other kinds of fake news? Why or why not?
3. Do you think it is ethical to pay users if their posts generate more interaction on social media sites?
4. Do you think it should be illegal to spread fake news during emergencies? If so, what should the punishment be?
5. Have you ever trusted news on social media over mainstream news outlets?