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In the wake of the Halloween shooting in Orinda, Airbnb struggles to change

By Sora O'Doherty

The shooting on Halloween that left five young people dead and one in a coma has prompted Airbnb to make changes, as it contemplates going public next year. Airbnb CEO and founder Brian Chesky on Nov. 6 stated via social media, "Starting today, we are banning 'party houses' and we are redoubling our efforts to combat unauthorized parties and get rid of abusive host and guest conduct, including conduct that leads to the terrible events we saw in Orinda." Later that day he sent an email to the company's employees, promising improvements to the company designed to restore trust. To address unauthorized house parties, beginning on Dec. 15, Airbnb will expand manual screening of high-risk reservations flagged by their risk detection models to the U.S. this year and globally next year.

According to Chesky, "events by bad actors on our platform took advantage of that trust, including at a home in Orinda, California." He said the company was taking four steps to restore trust. In addition to the manual screening of high-risk reservations, Chesky promised that by the end of the year, all seven million listings on Airbnb will be reviewed and verified. Beginning on Dec. 15, Airbnb will offer a guest guarantee so that any guest who is dissatisfied with a property can rebook at a new listing of equal or greater value, or get 100 percent of their money back. In addition, the company is launching a new, 24/7 Neighbor Hotline so that anyone can call the company anytime, anywhere in the world and reach a real person at Airbnb. The hotline will be staffed with a rapid response team and will launch in the U.S. by the end of this year, and will roll out globally over the course of next year.

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, after a statement was issued by an attorney representing the family of one of the victims, noting a lack of support for the family, Airbnb did offer to pay funeral expenses for all five of the people killed at the party, and to provide trauma counseling.

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