

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 23, 2022

Andy Jassy  
Chief Executive Officer  
Amazon, Inc.  
410 Terry Avenue N  
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Jassy:

We are writing regarding our concerns for Amazon employees' workplace safety ahead of the forthcoming holiday sales season. As American families gather together for celebrations honoring gratitude and peace, retail workers often face the dual crunch of limited paid time off with their families combined with the busiest and most difficult work environments of the year. Given that working conditions are often most stressed at this time, we are particularly concerned about Amazon warehouse employees following the tragic deaths of three workers within a three-week span at New Jersey Amazon facilities this summer.<sup>1</sup> Despite public commitments from your former CEO to make the company "Earth's Safest Place to Work," injury rates at fulfillment centers increased by 54% in New Jersey and 20% across the country from 2020 to 2021.<sup>23</sup> The standards for health and safety employed by Amazon are insufficient and the patterns and practices of putting employees in danger requires a thorough investigation as well as new measures to prevent future tragedy. As Amazon prepares for its busiest sales period of the year, we urge you to take immediate steps to prioritize the health and safety of your workers by mitigating dangerous workplace conditions and practices that put too many workers at risk. As the employer of over 1 million Americans, Amazon has a moral responsibility to set high standards for the dignity of retail workers everywhere.

There has been a long history of dangerous workplace conditions for Amazon employees and yet Amazon continues to publicly misrepresent the safety hazards confronting workers. Most recently, we have heard of dangerous working conditions associated with weather and heat-related circumstances. In 2011, so many employees from an Allentown, Pennsylvania warehouse were hospitalized from heat related injuries, due to an internal temperature reported by an employee to be 102 degrees, that your company hired an ambulance to position itself outside the building in anticipation of injury, rather than create a safe work environment.<sup>4</sup> In December of 2020, six Amazon workers died when a tornado touched down on the facility, collapsing the roof. Following the tragedy, Amazon reported, that "all Amazon employees, whether they are with us full-time, part-time, or just for a season, receive extensive safety training on their first day and throughout their time with the company." An investigation from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found that employees were offered no training in severe weather or shelter-in-place drills and workers were unaware of tornado shelter sites – another display of the company's denial and unwillingness to take responsibility or to enact any meaningful change to prevent future harm to employees.

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<sup>1</sup>[NJ Amazon warehouse worker deaths spurs OSHA investigation \(mycentraljersey.com\)](https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/2022/11/23/nj-amazon-warehouse-worker-deaths-spurs-osha-investigation/7044444002/)

<sup>2</sup> [The Injury Machine: How Amazon's Production System Hurts Workers - Strategic Organizing Center \(thesoc.org\)](https://thesoc.org/the-injury-machine-how-amazon-s-production-system-hurts-workers/)

<sup>3</sup> [2022 4 27 Amazon Injury research brief FINAL.docx | Powered by Box](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Inside Amazon's Very Hot Warehouse - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/24/us/amazon-warehouse-workers-died-tornado.html)

As this pattern of insufficient response by Amazon continues and the effects are evident, it is even more important for Amazon to address exacerbated safety issues during busy holidays for consumers. In 2019, a report found that Amazon employees suffered serious injuries at five times the rate of the national average for all private industries.<sup>5</sup> Rafael Mota, an Amazon worker at a facility in Carteret was the first of three New Jersey Amazon employees who died this summer. His coworkers reported that Rafael had pleaded for fans to be placed near them in the facility, a request which was denied hours before his death. This fatality occurred on Prime Day, the biggest “deal event of the year.” Data from 2019 shows that Amazon had full knowledge of the risks associated with Prime Day and internal reports warned that warehouses in New Jersey, New York, Maryland and Connecticut “were expecting an increase in injuries across all sites during Prime Week.”<sup>6</sup> Eleven days after Rafael’s death, an Amazon employee died at a facility in Robbinsville, New Jersey, a location which had a record of worker safety violations.<sup>7</sup> The following week, another fatality occurred at a delivery station in Monroe, New Jersey. This is abhorrent.

Concerns about workplace safety at Amazon facilities are not unique to New Jersey. In Memphis, Tennessee this summer, workers reported access to one sole bottle of water per ten-hour shift while working in trailers that reached up to 145 degrees. Workers also explained that managers on site regularly ignore a rule requiring workers to rotate out of the trailers every two hours, and another rule that prohibits workers from unloading a truck alone, for the sake of efficiency.<sup>8</sup> In 2019, multiple dehydrated workers in Etna, Ohio, had heart attacks working at an Amazon warehouse and died shortly thereafter.<sup>9</sup> The rest of the workers were asked to quickly resume their work. In each case, Amazon did nothing to improve workplace conditions and ensure worker safety.

Reporting suggests that conditions for Amazon workers are worsening and are out of line with industry norms, leading to ongoing federal investigations and litigation across the country. Indeed, OSHA is conducting an ongoing investigation into hazards in Amazon warehouses in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, California, Tennessee, Washington, and nation-wide. Under the OSHA law, employers have a legal obligation to provide a workplace free of hazards that can cause serious physical harm or death. We urge you to proactively implement policies to improve conditions in the meantime.

In particular, we urge you to:

- Immediately implement paid, comprehensive workplace safety trainings for all employees, including temporary workers, independent contractors, and any other worker performing duties for Amazon;
  - Workers must be trained on the early symptoms of heat stress and workers must be encouraged to report such symptoms free from retaliation.
- Take steps to improve warehouse ventilation and air quality, including through facilities upgrades and investments including new or enlarged A/C units, fans, and windows with the ability to open.

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<sup>5</sup> [Packaging Pain: Workplace Injuries in Amazon's Empire \(nelp.org\)](https://nelp.org/packaging-pain-workplace-injuries-in-amazon-s-empire)

<sup>6</sup> [Amazon's internal records show its worker safety deception \(revealnews.org\)](https://revealnews.org/amazon-internal-records-show-its-worker-safety-deception)

<sup>7</sup> In 2015, an OSHA inspection revealed that AmCare employees were providing medical care beyond the first aid treatment that they were qualified to offer. The OSHA area director overseeing the inspection was so alarmed by the situation that she sent a letter directly to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos notifying him that her inspection revealed, “AMCARE personnel were providing medical care beyond what is allowed by their licensing and certification without the supervision of a board certified qualified medical professional licensed to practice independently. When OSHA conducted an additional inspection of the Robbinsville facility in February of 2019, investigators learned that while care protocols had been updated, AmCare Onsite Medical Representatives were being allowed to treat workers for up to 21 days before referring a worker to a physician. The OSHA area director responsible for that investigation wrote that, “a delay in physician-supervised treatment of that duration is not consistent with the standard of medical care expected at a health care facility”. [Package Pain \(NELP\)](https://nelp.org/packaging-pain).

<sup>8</sup> [Photos Reveal Amazon Workers in Scorching 145° Trailers \(perfectunion.us\)](https://perfectunion.us/photos-reveal-amazon-workers-in-scorching-145-trailers)

<sup>9</sup> [‘Go back to work’: outcry over deaths on Amazon’s warehouse floor \(The Guardian\)](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/aug/27/amazon-warehouse-deaths)

- Improve shift rotations so that workers are not spending prolonged periods of time working close to significant indoor heat sources, including large-scale machinery like boilers, or performing highly aerobic activities without rest;
  - When heat index is above 80 degrees, Amazon must supply and assure workers have time to drink at least 32 ounces of water per hour;
  - Amazon must not require dehydrated workers to continue working;
  - Amazon must allow workers to rest in a cool room.
- Allow and encourage workers to take a preventative cool-down rest in the cool areas when they feel the need to do so to protect themselves from overheating and such access shall be permitted at all times.
  - Any worker who takes a preventative cool-down rest must be monitored and asked if he or she is experiencing symptoms of heat illness; the worker should be encouraged to remain in the cool down area, and should not be ordered back to work until any signs or symptoms of heat illness have abated.
  - Workers that complain of symptoms of heat stress or heat stroke must be removed from the job, placed in a cool room and watched and shall not be left alone or sent home without being offered onsite first aid and/or being provided with emergency medical services in accordance with the employer's procedures.
  - If the signs or symptoms are indicators of severe heat illness (such as, but not limited to, decreased level of consciousness, staggering, vomiting, disorientation, irrational behavior or convulsions), the employer must implement emergency response procedures and contact emergency medical services and, if necessary, transport employees to a place where they can be reached by an emergency medical provider.
- Address the sky-high rates of musculoskeletal disorders in all operations by immediately conducting a safety analysis to identify the ergonomic hazards and implement job design changes that reduce the risk to workers.
- Provide adequate and timely medical referral for a doctor's care to injured workers, assuring that the delays in care found by OSHA in its investigations of the New Jersey Robbinsville facility no longer exist and that all medical staff are operating under their legal scope of practice.
- Hire enough workers to provide all workers with appropriate time off with their families.

We hope you will recognize the importance of the holiday season as a time to invest in your workers and their collective safety. We urge you to fulfill your moral responsibilities to the millions of Americans you employ during these seasons of gratitude, faith, and joy for many.

Sincerely,



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator