

Amazon workers force company to rehire unjustly fired worker after IAWV exposure

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A single mother of two who was fired by Amazon when she was unable to work forced overtime was rehired after workers at the Pittsburgh plant united against the firing and reported it to the *International Amazon Workers Voice*.

Workers report that the woman, a mother of two young daughters, was coming off a Sunday 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. shift when her supervisor announced that there was going to be forced overtime, or what Amazon refers to as “flexing-up.”

She explained to her supervisor that she would miss her ride home and buses don’t run very often on Sunday. The supervisor told her it was “OK” to leave, but later that day she received an email telling her she had used up all her “Unpaid time off” and that she was fired. The *International Amazon Workers Voice* (IAWV) exposed this act of corporate abuse in an article published on September 1 that was read by thousands of Amazon workers worldwide.

Workers shared the story of her firing and demanded that the company reinstate her. The corporation then did so. The re-hiring may seem like a small victory, but it is a powerful indication of the strength Amazon workers have when they unite to protect one another’s rights.

The worker who first reported the firing to the IAWV said, “This shows that we can speak out and stand up for our rights,” adding, “People have to stick together. We have to realize that Bezos only gets his money because we are doing all the work. If we stopped working, the packages wouldn’t get delivered. These people who make all the money don’t know how to get the packages out to the customers and they couldn’t do it. People have to see that we really have the strength if we all stick together and speak up.”

Amazon is aware of the immense potential power of

the hundreds of thousands of workers who make the company run but whose labor is exploited for corporate profit.

Many workers report that Amazon prevents workers from even talking to one another, out of fear that they will share one another’s stories of Amazon’s exploitation. If workers are seen talking, they are first told to stop but will then be transferred to different jobs and kept separated. Workers who continue to talk with others are soon fired, workers report.

“People have to speak up,” said the worker who reported the firing. “Everyone is afraid to talk up because there are so few jobs and they don’t want to get fired. This is happening to too many other people who we don’t even know about.”

The *International Amazon Workers Voice* is fighting to break through the fear caused by dictatorial conditions and to provide Amazon workers with a platform to share their stories of abuse with their coworkers internationally. Workers not only confront the same problems as fellow workers at their own warehouses, they face the same issues as their coworkers across the world, in the UK, France, China, India, Mexico, Brazil and elsewhere.

Many of Amazon workers at the Pittsburgh warehouse are part-time and oppose the lack of flexibility on taking time off. They work a four-hour shift, but are routinely forced to work overtime if there are still more packages that need shipped out. Workers who are unable to stay the extra hours are penalized and then fired.

As part-time workers, they don’t get any vacation time, sick days or even personal time. Instead they are granted a block of hours, called “Unpaid Time Off,” or UPT. Each worker is granted 30 hours of UPT when they are first hired and another 20 hours each three

months, for a total of just 80 hours a year.

When they are sick, need to go to a doctor, take care of a family member, meet with their children's teacher or just want a day off, they have to use their UPT for it. Even if a worker is injured on the job--and many suffer from back and other joint problems, caused by the constant walking, bending and lifting--unless they can prove that it is Amazon's fault and open a Workmen's Compensation claim, they have to use their UPT hours.

The worker involved in the rehiring of the fired Amazon worker said it is just the beginning of a fight to address the legitimate grievances of Amazon workers across the world:

“The company fires people for stuff like this all the time. How many other people have been fired that we don't know about? And she still didn't get paid for the time she was off!”

This victory at the Pittsburgh warehouse shows that workers can fight back against this giant corporation when they expose the corporate dictatorship and explain to other workers that the entire workforce faces the same conditions.

Especially at a time when every local government is fighting to bribe Amazon with billions of dollars in giveaways in exchange for constructing their second headquarters in their area, no one but the workers themselves is going to stand up to corporate abuse. The government, the media, the trade unions, and the political parties are bought and sold tools of corporations like Amazon. Workers must build their own independent organizations—workplace committees—to fight corporate exploitation, on the principle that the interests of the working class are antagonistic to those of the companies and the pro-corporate trade unions.

Share your story of corporate abuse with the IAWV and launch a fight among your coworkers to defend the rights of Amazon workers worldwide.



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