

# UPS worker killed at Atlanta hub

Steve Filips  
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As the Christmas shipping deadline looms, workers are being pushed to the limit, forcing them to risk life and limb for investor profits.

Last Friday, December 15, at approximately 2:15 pm in the afternoon, William Stubbs, 51, was killed in the United Parcel Service (UPS) Pleasantdale Road hub facility near the giant package delivery company's headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. In a statement to the media, a UPS spokesperson said William was a 17-year veteran and warehouse worker for UPS.

Stubbs had been assigned to unload trailers on Friday, according to a DeKalb County police spokeswoman who told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, "The victim had stepped off the dock and was standing on the ground between the dock door and the trailer that was being backed into the docking door."

All of the statements on social media have characterized Stubbs as a good worker and well liked. He apparently did not have any immediate family. A coworker presented a different version of the events than the official account.

One worker, writing on the Facebook page of the Teamsters Local 728, said, "Will was the model employee, a good man and my friend." He said inexperienced "corporate employees," presumably salaried personnel, unexpectedly pulled the trailer out of the dock while William was still working inside. "They pulled the wrong trailer with him in it. He fell out of the trailer and onto the ground/yard... He tried to get back up but didn't make it. This job was his life and they took it from him. This should not have happened." Claudon added, "UPS should not have Corporate employees doing Teamster's jobs."

The drivers of the tractor trailers within a yard use a special utility vehicle to shuttle trailers to docks to be loaded or unloaded. Often the operators do not possess commercial driver's certification required to drive on public highways.

There are many unanswered questions, including: why wasn't the trailer chocked or restrained? Was there a signaling system that would communicate whether it was safe to move the trailer? Why has the union allowed so-called corporate workers to take up safety-sensitive positions?

There is likely a sophisticated worker surveillance system within the distribution center, which could provide detailed evidence of whether safety procedures were in place to protect workers from being crushed by trailers being backed into the docks. If such footage reveals the company is at fault, then it is reasonable to believe it will not see the light of day.

Like workers at FedEx, US Postal Service, Amazon and other package delivery corporations, UPS workers have been under the gun to meet increased demand during the Christmas holiday. Opposition among rank-and-file workers is so intense, even Teamsters President James Hoffa Jr. felt compelled to complain about understaffing and the constant strain being imposed on UPS workers this holiday season.

Earlier this month, UPS announced it was changing driver schedules from the federal Department of Transportation's commercial drivers' schedule, 60 hours worked in a seven-day work week, to 70 hours within eight days before a driver is allowed to take 34 hours off uninterrupted. This will result in placing fatigued workers on the roadways.

UPS spokesman Dean Foust said the extended hours comply with all Department of Transportation regulations and will last until Jan. 5. The change, the company says, is due to "greater-than-expected surge in volume." The company expects to deliver about 750 million packages this holiday season, which extends from Thanksgiving until December 31, up 40 million from the 2016 holiday season.

"If you're doing 300 or 400 stops a day, delivering heavy packages up to 150 pounds and have to keep

going and going and going and then have to put another 10 hours on top of that, it can lead to fatigue. It can make you drowsy. It can make you make a mistake in driving,” a UPS driver told the local media in Phoenix, Arizona.

With the current five-year agreement for 250,000 UPS workers expiring in July, the Teamsters have postured as opponents of the campaign of speedup. The union has done nothing, however, other than filing a series of complaints with the National Labor Relations Board. The impotent character of such appeals is underscored by the fact that the NLRB now includes Trump’s pick for the general counsel of the agency, Peter Robb, a pro-company lawyer who was President Reagan’s lead attorney in the smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers’ union in 1981.

The Teamsters have long collaborated with UPS, which was one of the first major corporations to employ part-time and temporary employees. Workers have long complained of two-tier wage and benefit systems, unsecure hours and being buried inside trailer trucks by the cardboard packages handled by “Big Brown.” Far from protecting workers, the Teamsters union, like other unions, has set up labor-management health and safety committees, largely designed to cut workers compensation costs for management and block any real fight against unsafe conditions, understaffing and job overloading.

A number of workers spoke out about the sham nature of the UPS/IBT safety committees on Facebook. One worker posted, “The company doesn’t give a crap about safety. They’ve shown they only care about meeting production standards, no matter the cost. The Teamsters should pull ALL safety committees in every center and hub. No Teamster should be doing anything involving the company’s safety committees. We can still hold the company accountable thru the grievance process and government agencies. How many more of our Brothers and Sisters must we lose before we make a stand?”

UPS had 434,000 workers in 2016 and pulled in over \$3.4 billion in profit last year.



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