

Amazon worker dies after vomiting blood at Sacramento, California fulfillment center

Kristina Betinis
23 December 2017

According to media reports, on December 14 a still-unnamed male worker in the Amazon fulfillment plant in Sacramento, California became ill, vomited blood and was hospitalized. He died the next day.

The company confirmed he was a full-time employee. An Amazon spokesperson tried to distance the company from the incident, saying, “An employee experienced a personal medical incident.”

The state’s occupational safety agency, CalOSHA, is reportedly investigating the death. CalOSHA spokesman Frank Polizzi told the *Sacramento Bee* that work in the plant continued as normal after the event, as the agency found no danger to other workers.

CalOSHA has six months to carry out an investigation and issue any citations. Corporations routinely pay slap-on-the-wrist fines as conditions in workplaces have steadily worsened. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released figures showing 5,190 fatal workplace injuries in 2016, up seven percent from the 4,836 workers killed on the job in 2015.

Amazon employs 125,000 workers in 75 US fulfillment centers. For this year’s holiday rush, the company has nearly doubled its workforce, hiring an extra 120,000 across 33 US states on a temporary basis, and the same as its 2016 seasonal hires.

Dangerous working conditions prevail in the company’s warehouses. There have now been at least three Amazon workers who have died on the job in recent months. In September, 59-year-old Philip Terry was crushed to death in an Indianapolis-area fulfillment center, and 28-year-old Devan Shoemaker was run over by a truck working at a fulfillment center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

On the same day that the unnamed Amazon worker died in Sacramento, a UPS warehouse worker, 51-year-old William Stubbs, was killed in that company’s

Atlanta hub.

In Terry’s death, the Indiana Department of Labor named four violations that might result in fines of as much as \$7,000 each, which included poor training and violation of safety procedures. Amazon can appeal those penalties. No additional findings have yet been reported by OSHA on Shoemaker’s death.

The Metro Air Park fulfillment center in Sacramento opened on October 25 this year, and in the first month of its operation became known for deplorable work conditions, with little or no time to sit down, eat a meal or use the toilet. About 30 days after Metro Air Park’s opening, workers brought a class-action suit against Amazon for unpaid overtime, unpaid wages and denial of breaks. The suit reportedly covers all California Amazon employees.

At Metro Air Park, about 1,500 employees share a massive 855,000 square-foot campus with robotic devices that the company boasts increase inventory capacity and reduce time to ship. A facility of this size can be expected to process up to one million orders a day during the holiday season, according to Amazon officials. The facility is located near the Sacramento International Airport, where Amazon has received city approval to open an air cargo facility.

The super-exploitation of the Amazon workforce is worldwide phenomenon. In a recent exposure of Amazon warehouse conditions in Britain, a fulfillment worker described his job: “Alone in a locked metal cage, 10 feet from my nearest colleague, a robot approaches from the shadows and thrusts a tower of shelves towards me. I have nine seconds to grab and process an item to be sent for packing—a target of 300 items an hour, for hour after relentless hour.”

The company has built up its centers and expanded its workforce in areas hard hit by deindustrialization and

recession. It demands maximum scheduling flexibility and imposes mandatory overtime on all its fulfillment workers. Another 855,000 square foot facility, was recently approved for what was once the site of Bethlehem Steel near Baltimore, Maryland.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact