

“Amazon is really cold-hearted to its workers”

Injured Amazon worker forced to work to avoid being fired

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A worker employed at an Amazon fulfillment center in east Baltimore contacted the *International Amazon Workers Voice* [IAWV] to relay her experiences with the massive web technology corporation and her efforts to obtain help after being injured on the job.

The worker is married with two children. She is employed as a picker, i.e., someone who selects items that are then packaged and loaded onto trucks for shipment to various destinations around the world.

The worker noted that her problems with the company began roughly three weeks ago. “I was picking when I felt my shoulder strain,” she said. She went to Amazon’s in-house medical facility, Amcare.

The difficulties began almost immediately, when she was told by an Amcare physician that her shoulder pain was “not an injury” and she had simply “been working too much.”

“I’d had the pain before then,” she said, adding that “after three or four days off, strains will usually go away. This time it didn’t.”

She told the IAWV, “I was treated like a liar.”

Amcare said she should wait two hours to see if the pain subsided. When it didn’t, she was forced to take unpaid time off (UPT), during which she visited a physician, who determined that she had a shoulder sprain. “The doctor told me that they see these types of injuries ‘all the time’ from Amazon employees,” she noted.

According to the worker, Amcare is comprised of personnel who are unqualified to give medical diagnoses. A 2016 *Gawker* article, which quotes testimony from Amazon employees, describes Amcare as “like a school nurse’s office, and equally as competent.”

A whistle-blowing website, Amazonslavery.wordpress.com, says “AMCARE’s objective is to keep the employees at their workstations, which means giving false, uninformed medical evaluations.”

After returning to work with documented proof that an injury had taken place, the worker was confronted by human resources, who told her she would not be accommodated for her injury because nowhere on her physician’s paperwork did it say she was owed any relief. However, she was told she would potentially be eligible to receive workers’ compensation.

After a prolonged period waiting for the company’s workers’ compensation provider, Sedgwick, to respond to her application, she was forced to return to work as a picker without workers’ comp and without any accommodation for her shoulder injury. She told the IAWV she doubted she would ever receive compensation from the company.

“Amazon is really cold-hearted to its workers,” she said.

The *International Amazon Workers Voice* has reported on the criminal methods employed by Sedgwick, including the hiring of private detectives to spy on workers who request funds owed to them by the company and the ignoring of injuries, even when presented with written confirmation from a physician.

As of this writing, the worker has received no word about compensation. Having nearly exhausted her UPT hours, she has been compelled to return to work.

“I was told by Amazon that they would take care of the situation,” she said. “Then I was told in an email that my [UPT] time had run out. I even had to go to Amazon on a day that I was recuperating and straighten

the situation out” so as not to be fired for taking time off to heal.

Despite her physician’s recommendation that she be restricted to lifting objects 10 pounds or less, the worker was forced back onto heavier lifting because the company claimed no such “easy” positions were available. Only a few days prior to this, however, management had offered her just such an “easier” position.

The IAWV has reported a number of similar instances at Amazon’s Baltimore facility. The corporation has taken advantage of deindustrialized areas such as Baltimore, exploiting the lack of jobs with decent pay to take advantage of and brutalize the workforce.

According to the *Baltimore Business Journal*, Maryland officials have spent roughly \$46 million in tax subsidies to lure Amazon to the state and allow it to abuse its workers, including \$16.2 million in 2018 for the construction of a fulfillment center at Sparrow’s Point in the Baltimore suburbs. The fulfillment center, employing 1,500 workers, stands on the ashes of what was once the largest steel mill in the United States.

Speaking of the Sparrow’s Point fulfillment Center, the injured worker said she had already heard of a worker being victimized there, supposedly for stealing a piece of candy.

“Amazon is a really cold-hearted company,” she repeated.

She expressed her gratitude to the IAWV for reporting her story and wholeheartedly agreed on the need for workers to begin speaking to one another and organizing a struggle against the massive web commerce corporation.



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