

Young FedEx worker killed in latest industrial death at Memphis World Hub

Warren Duzak
18 November 2019

A young Federal Express worker, the father of two children, was killed last week while working the midnight shift at the company's Express World Hub in Memphis, Tennessee.

Duntate Young, 23, died in hospital at about 2:20 a.m. Wednesday following what has been described as an accident at the FedEx facility where Young was employed as a temporary worker. He had been working at the hub for only a month, family members told the media, having been hired through the temp agency Volt Workforce Solutions.

Tragically, Young died on the birthday of his 6-year-old son, according to Young's cousin, Carmelia Mosley. "His son just turned 6 yesterday, and he has a newborn which is about maybe 6 months," Mosley told localmemphis.com.

"His personality [would] just light up the room," she said.

FedEx, headquartered in Memphis, is one of the largest shipping companies in the world, with delivery and freight services in 220 countries and territories and over 400,000 workers globally. Its revenue for fiscal year 2019 was \$69.7 billion. With the help of corporate tax cuts enacted by the Trump administration, the company was able to slash its tax bill from \$1.5 billion in fiscal 2017 to zero in 2018.

Approximately 11,000 work at the World Hub.

"Everybody is devastated by what has happened. Everybody wants to know the same thing that I want to know, how did this happen?" said Troy McClanton, the young worker's father. McClanton told Memphis local news that his son's co-workers told him that Duntate was fatally injured by a 3-1/2 ton (7,000 pound) container.

"I heard he got crushed, his leg got caught, but I'm not hearing anything from FedEx about what

happened," said McClanton.

A FedEx worker in Chicago told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the death comes as the company is speeding up work leading into the grueling holiday shipping season. "Black Friday is coming up which is usually our busiest week," he said. "We get huge bulk shipments of TVs and such that go to Best Buy and Walmart. When there's nothing going on they're so finicky about procedure and safety. But as soon as it gets busy that goes out the window."

Howard Manis, attorney for the Young family, released a statement that FedEx had "been uncooperative in our attempts to gather information on behalf of Duntate's family. This family deserves answers."

The Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Administration (TOSHA) has announced it is investigating Young's death. As with other state safety agencies, TOSHA has often taken up to six months to complete an investigation, which frequently results in wrist-slap fines and whitewashes of corporate negligence.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of our team member at the Memphis hub," FedEx said in a perfunctory statement on Young's death. "Our thoughts are with our colleague's family, friends and co-workers at this difficult time."

"We are always focused on the health and safety of our people," the statement continued. "We are fully cooperating with investigating authorities, who at this point have not advised us of the cause of the death."

According to the *Daily Memphian*, four workers have been killed at FedEx's Memphis World Hub since 2014, including Young. Jeffrey Rosenblum, an attorney who has represented families of others killed at FedEx's facilities, sharply criticized the company's

safety record: “People are dying at an almost unbelievable pace, in my opinion. It’s unacceptable.”

When a worker was killed at the Memphis World Hub in November 2017 after being trapped under a loader, the company quickly issued a similar boilerplate statement: “Words cannot convey the sadness we feel over the loss of our team member in an accident at the Memphis hub. Our prayers are with our colleague’s family, friends, and co-workers. We are cooperating with authorities in their investigation.”

TOSHA later found that Ellen Gladney, 60, was caught and dragged by a motorized cargo lift. The agency cited FedEx for a safety violation leading to death and, as is often the case, issued a derisory fine of just \$7,000.

In East Moline, Illinois, earlier this year, William L. Murphy, a 69-year-old FedEx driver, was found frozen to death between two semi-trucks by another employee after working in record cold temperatures of negative 20 to 30 degrees Fahrenheit.

The attorneys for Young’s surviving family say they are conducting their own investigation into the causes of his death.

“He was here a couple of days ago in the den asleep,” Troy McClanton said of his dead son. “I wish right now I could wake him up. I wish I woke him up just to tell him how much I love him.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact