

First Amazon worker at Amazon's Seattle headquarters tests positive for coronavirus

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Reports emerged March 3 indicating that an employee at Amazon's Seattle headquarters has tested positive for the coronavirus, which is spreading across the US. According to an internal email obtained by [geekwire.com](#), the employee went home sick on Tuesday, February 25, and later tested positive for Covid-19.

Amazon notified employees who came into close contact with the unidentified individual, based out of Amazon's Brazil (SEA53) building at 400 9th Avenue N, near downtown Seattle.

The email states: "We notified the employees who we know were in close contact with this employee. Close contact is defined as being closer than 6 feet/2 meters over a prolonged period of time."

The Amazon email claimed, "The risk of transmission for employees who were not in close contact with this individual is assessed to be low," before encouraging those experiencing symptoms to "please stay home and seek medical attention." Workers will have a hard time believing the claim that, "Your health is our top priority," given Amazon's draconian work practices.

Amazon had earlier confirmed that two of its employees in Italy had contracted the virus and were in quarantine. The company had earlier requested that its nearly 800,000 employees cancel non-essential travel in the US and elsewhere.

Washington state is the place where the overwhelming number of deaths in the US have occurred. There is an ongoing outbreak in nearby Kirkland, Washington, where the virus has spread among elderly residents at a nursing facility and the first death in the US was reported. At least 21 people have contracted the virus in King County, which encompasses Seattle.

The US death toll hit 11 on Wednesday as Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and county officials declared states of emergency and announced six additional cases of the deadly virus. More than 130 cases have been confirmed across the nation. Prior to Wednesday's announcement, Los Angeles officials had confirmed just one case.

A death reported Wednesday by Placer County, near Sacramento, California, is the first fatality outside of Washington state.

In addition to the human toll, the coronavirus is having a massive impact on the stock market. The *Washington Business Journal* noted that Amazon stock was down \$51.05 Tuesday while noting "Amazon's value is up nearly 2 percent from the start of the year. Still, shares trended down through Tuesday, when it closed down 2.3 percent.

The *Journal* went on to comment: "Amazon CEO and world's richest man Jeff Bezos saw a one-week decline in his net worth of \$2.8 billion. That would have been enough money to buy 490 million 8-ounce bottles of Purell Advanced Hand Sanitizer on Amazon's website, when the product was selling for just \$5.78 on Feb 25. But those prices are hard to find now as coronavirus concerns grow."

The coronavirus is having a massive impact and threatens to plunge the US and world economy into a recession. One indicator of this is the event industry.

According to a 2017 report, more than 1.5 billion people participated in conferences across 180 countries. Business events generated more than \$1.07 trillion of direct spending, representing spending to plan and produce business events, business events-related travel, and other direct spending such as by exhibitors.

The same report says business events supported 10.30 million direct jobs globally and generated \$621.4

billion of direct GDP. On average, \$704 was spent per business event participant.

The top 50 countries accounted for \$1.03 trillion of business events direct spending, representing 96 percent of the global total.

Events produced \$2.5 trillion of output, 26 million jobs and \$1.5 trillion of GDP.

According to the report:

“The \$1.5 trillion of total GDP supported by global business events would rank the sector as the 13th largest economy globally, larger than the economies of countries such as Australia, Spain, Mexico, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia. Based on its \$621.4 billion direct GDP impact, the business events sector would rank as the 22nd largest economy globally.”

A number of prominent tech events have been cancelled, postponed or made online only events. They include:

- * Facebook F8 May 6-8 in San Jose, California—canceled

- * Shopify Unite 2020 developers conference May 6-8 Toronto—in person cancelled; online only

- * Google Cloud Next April 6-8 in San Francisco—in person cancelled; online only

- * Adobe Summit Mar 29–April 2—in person cancelled; online only

- * Google News Initiative Summit Late April in Sunnyvale, California—canceled

- * Black Hat Asia 2020 March 31–April 2 in Singapore—postponed until September 29–October 2

- * Paris Blockchain Week Summit March 31–April 1—postponed until December 9–10

- * EmTech Asia March 24–36 Singapore—postponed to August 4–5

- * Nvidia GTC—GPU Technology Conference March 22–25—In person canceled; online only

- * Demopalooza March 18–19 in Salt Lake City, Utah—In person canceled; online only

- * Game Developers Conference (GDC) March 16–20 in San Francisco—postponed to summer 2020

- * Facebook Global Marketing Summit, March 9–12—canceled

- * Salesforce World Tour, March 4 in Sydney—In person cancelled; online only

- * Cisco Live Melbourne March 3–6 in Melbourne—canceled

- * RSA Conference February 24–28 in San

Francisco—held as planned but IBM, AT&T, Verizon and other vendors withdraw

- * Mobile World Congress MWC, Barcelona February 24–27—canceled

The immediate impact of this is a massive wave of job losses. The Seattle-based online travel giant Expedia Group online travel agency is to lay off 12 percent of its workforce, about 3,000 employees, in an effort to “streamline and focus.” This comes under chairman Barry Diller following the ouster of its CEO and CFO late last year.

American businesses cut twice as many jobs in January as they did in December, with the technology industry leading the way. US-based employers cut 67,735 jobs in January, a 106 percent increase from 32,843 jobs cut in December, according to the latest job cuts report from outplacement service firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

The most dramatic cuts were in tech companies, up 1,829 percent compared to December and up 2,073 percent compared to last January, with 13,869 cuts.



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