

St. Louis, Missouri, Amazon worker fired after not being informed of a schedule change

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A former worker at Amazon's STL5 location in St. Louis, Missouri, recently contacted the *International Amazon Workers Voice* to explain how he had lost his job after he became locked out of the phone app that allows him to check his job schedule.

Dawson Thomas says that after nearly a year of working at the company as a warehouse assistant, he became locked out of his "Amazon A to Z" phone application. According to Thomas, "[m]y schedule was changed without my knowledge, and I continued to go to my regular shift unknowingly.

"I talked to many people from [human resources] about the situation, and they said that they would take care of it. I even had my area manager talk to them," he added. Despite these appeals, he was soon terminated after exceeding his allotment of UPT (Unpaid Time off).

Thomas made numerous appeals to his employer to be reinstated. He was never called back. "They claim they have tried to call me multiple times," he said, adding that Amazon has refused to rehire him until a year has passed.

Like many young workers, Thomas said he was in a "tight spot" financially and requires his job in order to resolve it. "I have five major problems in my life, and they all require money for me to get out of them," he said.

He listed court fees from a lawsuit concerning his child, a vehicle that was towed and destroyed "because I didn't have the money" to retrieve it, typical expenses such as bills as well as a medical condition. "I have MS (multiple sclerosis, an incurable disease that impairs one's motor functions) with three dislocated ribs and can't afford a chiropractor," he said, apologizing for having listed all of his problems. "I wish I could just go back to work."

According to the *Jobdeedposting* site Amazon workers receive 80 hours of UPT at their hiring. "Every four months they give 20 hours if you have used the time, but if not, you do not receive any more time." The comment states: "Once you go over even a minute of 80 hours you are terminated."

The conditions at Thomas's job are symptomatic of the treatment workers receive inside the 1.4 million-worker logistics giant. Such impersonal methods, in which workers are stonewalled while trying to resolve such issues, place the burden of proof on the workers. According to a recent investigation of Amazon's pandemic response published in the *New York Times* this month: "A worker whose rate was too slow, or whose time off task climbed too high ... the system assumed the worker was to blame."

According to the report, this is written into Amazon's corporate model, which does not "want hourly workers to stick around for long." The *Times* cites a former Amazon official, who stated that the company's management sees "a large, disgruntled' work force as a threat."

Amazon's method of summarily firing workers for minor infractions and miscommunications has led to the company having a turnover rate of *150 percent a year*. This is equivalent to one and a half times Amazon's total workforce leaving yearly. This practice "has made some executives worry about running out of workers across America," states the *Times* article.

Thomas's predicament received outpourings of sympathy on social media, as numerous Amazonians have also experienced similar treatment. "I worked with a guy that this happened to," stated one worker on social media. "He finally got reinstated 7 months later."

Another worker stated: "[t]hey did this to my best friend. [He] tried to call and email but he never got

anything. How can they change your schedule?!! You will win this case but it might take awhile.” Another worker wrote: “My boyfriend got the same response. He got an appeal chance but when he went to the call nobody was there.

“When we emailed them … they said they have made a final choice [to] terminate him because he wasn’t on the call…” Other efforts to blame Thomas for failure to obtain his A to Z login information were denounced by fellow workers. “How exactly is it his fault he got locked out of an app that frequently has issues?” one worker stated.

According to the *Times*’ investigation, while ratings for the A to Z app are generally favorable, “even some of those who praise it see broader problems.” The article cites a review of the device on Google’s Play Store: “Associates should be able to speak to a person, not a virtual chat bot to get individual help. … Especially when many say they were fired because the chat reps forget sometimes or it doesn’t get through.”



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