

Amazon worker in New Jersey dies during Prime Week amid worldwide heat wave

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19 July 2022

A worker reportedly died while on the job at Amazon's Carteret, New Jersey, EWR9 fulfillment center last Wednesday during the company's busy Prime Week sales holiday.

The death occurred on the final day of the two-day Prime Week. *Huffington Post* reporter Dave Jamieson took to Twitter to report that the local Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) had informed him that a worker, whose name has not been released, died "during the Prime Day bonanza."

The New York *Gothamist* reported that the incident occurred sometime around 8 a.m. on July 13 and that the worker was quickly sent to the hospital to be later pronounced dead.

An Amazon worker from the facility spoke anonymously to the *International Amazon Workers Voice* about the situation. "The state is coming to my site because someone died while working. Amcare...took too long to get there and call [emergency medical services]. Management literally worked someone to death in that hot a— warehouse," they said.

According to *Accuweather*, the temperature in Carteret reached a high of 92 degrees Fahrenheit the day the worker was pronounced dead. "Dangerous heat will continue to impact a large portion of the US this week, with now more than 100 million people under excessive heat warnings or heat advisories," said the Weather Prediction Center on Tuesday.

Amazon, one of the United States' largest and most profitable employers, is routinely cited for its dangerous and unforgiving work conditions that produce obscenely high injury rates. "Amazon needs to f—— chill. They are working their employees to death like corporations from 120+ years ago. It's archaic and absurd. Might as well just start hiring children again," said a commenter on social media.

Internationalist interviewed an Amazon employee who referred to Prime Week as "a week of hell," in which safety is all but forgotten in pursuit of high sales.

Last year's numbers were exceeded by last week's event. According to *Business Wire*, the summer 2022 event was the "biggest Prime Day event in Amazon's history." The company shipped more than 300 million items, up from 250 million last year, representing a 20 percent increase in sales.

"Customers spent over \$3 billion on more than 100 million small business items included in the Support Small Businesses to Win Big sweepstakes," the publication wrote. Doug Herrington, Amazon CEO of Worldwide Stores, grotesquely cheered the event as "a celebration of our Prime members."

OSHA has announced "active investigations" against Amazon warehouses in several states following the corporation's busy week. According to *CNBC*, OSHA "on Monday inspected Amazon warehouses outside New York City, Chicago and Orlando for possible hazards in response to referrals received from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York."

The Southern District of New York office was "investigating potential worker safety hazards at Amazon warehouses across the country, as well as possible fraudulent conduct designed to hide injuries from OSHA and others," said spokesperson Nicholas Biase.

The OSHA official did not say if these investigations would include Amazon's widespread concealing of COVID-19 infections at its warehouses throughout the pandemic. A report last spring in the *Markup* detailed numerous instances of Amazon hiding COVID-19 outbreaks in its California warehouses, even as the

number of sicknesses threatened the company's bottom line.

The deaths at Amazon highlight an ongoing trend of crass exploitation in the warehouse logistics industry. On June 25, 24-year-old United Parcel Service driver Esteban Chavez, Jr. collapsed inside his delivery van while working. The young worker lay unconscious for over 20 minutes before he was discovered by a passerby.

The widespread instance of on-the-job heatstroke and injury further exposes Amazon's claims to be focused on worker safety. Amazon seized on the pandemic to claim its services were "essential." Under this guise, the company was able to double its profits and expand its operations, sacrificing worker health and safety in the process.

In April, the company falsely cited "the sustained easing of the pandemic" as an excuse to get rid of COVID-19 paid sick leave for workers. As with Amazon's previous decision to remove masks in 2021, immediately prior to the surge of the Delta variant, the dropping of public health measures has paved the way for the current spread of the BA.5 sub-variant of Omicron, believed to be "the worst version of the virus" by cardiologist Eric Topol of Scripps Research Translational Institute.



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