

Pittsburgh Amazon driver speaks out: “It is time for all of us to unite together and stand up to these companies”

An Amazon delivery driver
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An Amazon delivery driver in Pittsburgh contacted the World Socialist Web Site to speak about the conditions that the workers are facing. The driver would like to begin building a rank-and-file committee to unite drivers from different contractors as well as the warehouse workers to fight against the horrendous working conditions, long hours and constant push by Amazon for more and more productivity at the workers' expense.

Work at Amazon? The WSWS wants to hear from you. Fill out the form below to contact us and tell us about your working conditions. All submissions will remain anonymous.

By an Amazon delivery driver

I deliver for Amazon, but I work for a contractor called a DSP (Delivery Service Partner). One of the ways that Amazon keeps us divided is by having us work for a thousand different DSPs so it hard to say who is responsible for how we are treated, the DSP or Amazon. This way Amazon can deny that they are the cause of our working conditions. It also makes it harder for us to organize since we all work for a thousand different contractors. However, it is Amazon which is setting the standards and forcing the conditions we work under.

I start my day around 9:30 and drive 50 minutes to the Amazon warehouse, where I pick up my truck, phone, charger and other equipment for the day. Each DSP has a specific loading time.

We have 20 minutes to load up our trucks and get out of the dock. Often we don't even get that. There will be a manager who will be yelling at us over the loudspeaker to hurry up. Sometimes they want us loaded and out in 6 minutes.

We are expected to deliver about 200 packages a day. But during Prime days, that number goes up to 250 packages. Amazon just had a Prime day (October 12 and 13). It is one day for them, but it becomes two weeks for us where we have the extra loads. Normally we work four 10-hour days, but during the weeks after each Prime day we end up

working five days.

We are just running all the time. The Amazon app gives you only two minutes to deliver a package and get to the next dropoff. You can never make that, so you end up never taking your breaks or lunch so that you can catch up.

We work 10-hour days but will often work 11 or 12 hours to finish our runs. That is 20 or 25 packages per hour.

The packages are given to us in tote bags. They are supposed to be grouped in order of our route, but the people in the warehouse are also being rushed and often they get put in the wrong order, and larger boxes can't fit, so they just go into the truck.

Since they rush us out of the dock, I have to spend my first break reorganizing my packages in the truck to try and get them in order.

If you fall behind, you are expected to just keep on working until you finish your route. I work for one of the better DSPs, not all of them are the same, but he will pay you overtime if you haven't finished your route. Others will not. Or you will get fired.

Amazon says that you are not working for them but for the DSP. But if they don't like you, they will put you on a “do not hire” list, and no contractor can hire you. Amazon will even put a DSP on the “do not hire” list, and everyone who works for that contractor loses their job.

That is what I mean; Amazon will claim that they are not responsible for the conditions that we work under, but they pressure the DSPs. It is also why, when someone posts something about Amazon on the internet, there are always people who will say, “It is not like that where I work.”

As soon as I start work, I am jumping in and out of our trucks. It is very bad for safety. I'm sure you heard of the people who died over the summer because of the heat. Around February, Amazon said that we had to turn the trucks off at each stop. First, it takes extra time to turn off and start the engine, but it also means that the truck never stays warm in the winter or cool in the summer.

Most of the time my routes are in the surrounding area. They try to group your drops so it is not very far from one to the next. Sometimes that works, and you can do two or three drops in a row, saving a little time. Others are further away, and you are rushing to make up.

Inside the city of Pittsburgh is very hard. There are a lot of one-way streets, and you have to drive this way and that to reach the home. Most of the houses are built on hills, and you have to run up and down the steps. They tell you to be careful, but you are always pressured to make your quota.

If you are feeling sick, it is up to the specific DSP to set the policy. Like I said, mine is better than most. The manager used to be a driver so they know what you are going through. They will tell you to come back and finish your route the next day. But I wouldn't do that too often, as Amazon may fire you. Right now, jobs are tight, so they might not be quite as hard on you as they would be if there were a lot of people looking for work.

They also try to divide employees. I used to work for a different DSP. If someone couldn't finish their route, they would blame the driver and make them look bad. When I would finish my route and call in that I was done and bringing the truck back, they might tell me to "go over and help so-and-so finish his route." Then they would try to tell you he is lazy.

Here you are, just delivered 200 packages, and looking forward to heading back and you have to work some more. It's a tactic to make you want to hate the other driver and not the DSP or Amazon, who are the ones really behind this crazy push.

One day last summer, I passed a truck that was pulled over, and I stopped to check. It was 9:30 at night, the woman was crying and saying that she just couldn't do it anymore. She wasn't done with her route, and she had called in to see if she could come in and was told she had to stay out until she finished all her drops. She told me that she has children at home, and she never gets to see them. For a few months we had 90- and even 100-degree days.

I'm guessing she quit or was fired. I never saw her again.

They always tell you that you are not working for Amazon. They went over that again and again during training. But Amazon can fire you. They log your hours in the app, and if you are driving too long, your DSP will tell you to log out of the app so your hours aren't showing up.

They also tell you that you are not a commercial driver. Commercial drivers are covered by laws that say how long they can drive and how long a break they have to have. Amazon makes sure our trucks are not classified as commercial; they want us delivering constantly.

I'm not exactly sure who owns the trucks. For a DSP to get started, they have to agree to buy or maybe lease so

many of the blue trucks. But then they can buy any broken-down van they want. Amazon is supposed to fix their trucks, but that is another way they pressure the DSPs. They won't fix the trucks or set up a time and then not do it, or not fix it right and make the DPS bring the truck back.

Amazon has also come out with a bigger truck that they want us to learn how to drive. They said that they would have a two-person team; one driver and one person doing the drops. Amazon wants those trucks to take 300 drops a day. My friend said don't sign up for the training, they will drop the second person. Sure enough, they did. They just wanted one person to do more.

You are not driving like a normal person, but you are jumping in and out all the time. You are supposed to wear your seatbelt, but that takes time. Often you just click it under your seat, other times you just pull it over your shoulder, so if a cop sees you, you don't get a ticket.

I work four 10-hour days. I like that, the three days off are nice. But often we end up working 11 or 12 hours to finish our route. My DSP pays us time and a half after 40 hours, but not everyone does. During the Prime days, we work five days, and they are often 12-hour shifts. That is a lot of hours; you just drop when the day is over.

I have teenage daughters who live with my ex. I don't get to see them except on my day off. Usually the first day I'm just sleeping trying to recover. Maybe I can see them on my second day off. I know they have friends whose parents are divorced, and sometimes they don't want to see their children. My kids are old enough to understand that I want to see them, but with a work schedule like this, I can't see them as much as I would like too.

All of this is so that Bezos gets rich. All they care about is the profits of the companies. He doesn't care about the people that work for him. We are the ones that make the company run, but we are treated like crap.

It is time for all of us to unite together and stand up to these companies. That is why I am forming a rank-and-file committee—to unite all workers and fight for better working conditions. I hope you fill out this form, tell us about the conditions you face and join our fight.



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