

Amazon workers plan walkout at Seattle headquarters on May 31

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Are you a worker at Amazon? Tell us what your working conditions are like by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

As many as 1,000 Amazon workers at the tech giant's Seattle, Washington headquarters plan to walk off the job on May 31 to protest layoffs, a return-to-office mandate and concerns about corporate climate policies.

A report in the *Washington Post* last Monday said messages were sent out via Slack and email by staff organizers, that urged employees to walk out on Wednesday over the ongoing corporate attack on the workers.

According to the *Post* report, the walkout on Wednesday at Amazon in Seattle is the combined effort of two groups, "one is an informal group that sprang up in response to the return-to-office mandate, and the other is Amazon Employees for Climate Justice."

In 2019, the latter organized a walkout that pressured Amazon into committing to its Climate Pledge, which promised the company would be carbon net zero by 2040. However, four years later, Amazon has no intention of living up to its commitment.

The protest is part of a growing wave of opposition to the assault on jobs and working conditions among tech workers in Silicon Valley and elsewhere that has accompanied the deliberate instigation of recessionary conditions by the U.S. government and Federal Reserve bank to impose the inflationary crisis onto the working class.

The *Post* quoted an Amazon employee in Los Angeles who plans to participate in the walk but asked not to be identified due to the threat of retaliation. The worker said, "Morale feels like it's at an all-time low. In meetings and one-on-ones with colleagues, there's so much uncertainty and lack of clarity from leadership. ... It's an unsettling time to work at Amazon."

When asked for a comment on the planned walkout, Amazon spokeswoman Lisa Levandowski said, "We respect our employees' rights to express their opinions."

The timing of the scheduled walkout comes one week after Amazon's annual shareholders' meeting on May 24. The

rapacious financial interests that control the investment in Amazon voted down 18 proposals that advocated environmental, social and governance (ESG)-focused measures such as warehouse workers' rights, union rights, gender and racial pay and animal welfare standards.

These decisions make clear that, as far as the billionaire investors are concerned, nothing will be done that impinges in the slightest on corporate profit returns and restoring Amazon to the peak of its Wall Street value in late 2021. Like virtually every tech company, Amazon lost more than half of its stock market value in 2022, going from over \$183 per share in November 2021 to \$84 on December 30, 2022.

Since the implementation of cost cutting measures, including the layoff of more than 27,000 workers since 2022, the Amazon stock value has climbed back to more than \$120 a share. The latest round of the Amazon tech jobs massacre was announced March 20 by CEO Jassy, who said 9,000 positions would be eliminated in cloud computing, human resources, advertising and Twitch livestreaming businesses in order to invest in "key long-term customer experiences."

The return-to-office mandate is part of this assault on the Amazon workforce. A few days later, Beth Galetti, the head of Amazon human services, rejected a petition by 30,000 workers calling on company CEO Andy Jassy to withdraw his directive that workers report to the office at least three days per week.

In a memo to the staff, Galetti said, "Given the large size of our workforce and our wide range of businesses and customers, we recognize this transition may take time, but we are confident it will result in long-term benefits to increasing our ability to deliver for our customers, bolstering our culture, and growing and developing employees."

In plain language, what Galetti said was that the \$1.2 trillion e-retail and tech corporation is going full steam ahead with the intensification of the exploitation of the workforce to guarantee increased profits and the expansion of the wealth accumulation of the largest stockholders.

In their petition, the Amazon workers made the case that

they are more productive and enjoy a better work-life balance in a remote work environment. They also argued that the three-day-per-week requirement contradicts official Amazon policy on issues such as affordable housing, diversity and climate change.

The recent decisions at Amazon, as well as the other tech monopolies such as Meta (parent of Facebook), Google and Apple, show that all the “progressive” corporate verbiage about concerns for the workforce and the environment is so much public relations jargon that is easily scrapped when it comes to protecting the essential interests of the capitalist class.

So far, 1,005 companies have laid off a total of 305,727 tech workers in 2023. This is on top of 1,557 companies who laid off a total of 243,318 workers in 2022.

Like Amazon, the experience of tech employees at Meta has been similar, where morale has dropped precipitously as thousands have lost their jobs while top executives received six-figure bonuses.

According to an SEC filing, Meta CFO Susan Li received \$575,613, CPO Christopher Cox received \$940,214, COO Javier Oliván received \$786,552, CTO Andrew Bosworth received \$714,588, Strategy Officer (CSO) David Whener received \$712,284 and former COO Sheryl Sandberg received \$298,385, while more than 20,000 employees lost their jobs.

These figures demonstrate that all the talk from Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg about “building a leaner, more technical company and improving our business performance to enable our long term vision” is actually about one thing: the destruction of jobs and working conditions in the service of vast sums of money for the top executives of the corporation and the investors.

On Wall Street, Meta Platforms stock went from a peak price of \$378 in September 2021 down to a low of \$90 in November 2022, a drop of more than 75 percent in value. Shortly after the job slashing began, Meta’s stock value began a steady rise, and as of Friday, it was up to \$262. Zuckerberg was told that the massive spending spree he has been on is over and he was given cost-cutting marching orders by the big investors that he had to carry out or else he would be removed as CEO.

As explained by the *Post*, “For more than a decade, investors gave tech executives nearly unlimited bandwidth for spending in hopes of dominating the market and uncovering the next great technology. The tech industry was a gold rush, and its headquarters, San Francisco, was a boomtown. But now, storefronts and office buildings stand empty, and old friends waiting in line for the bus home ask each other questions like, ‘Did you survive the cuts?’”

At Alphabet (Google’s parent company), which

announced 12,000 layoffs in January, there is also a growing mood of opposition among workers as the company has sought enforcement of its return-to-office policies while workers are awaiting additional layoffs. There are concerns that Alphabet management will use new in-office rules to thin out staff without announcing layoffs, according to people who spoke anonymously to the *Post*.

While Alphabet is slashing jobs, CEO Sundar Pichai was paid approximately \$226 million in total 2022 compensation. According to an SEC filing, Pichai’s annual salary was \$2 million, and the rest was derived from stock awards. Since the cost cutting began, Alphabet’s stock value rebounded from a low of \$88 in December 2022 to \$124 as of Friday. The other Google and Alphabet top executives made between \$22 million and \$35 million in annual stock awards, according to the filing.

While Amazon is refusing to address the demands of its office workers, it has also permitted deadly safety conditions to deteriorate in its warehouse and distribution operations. On May 8, 20-year-old Amazon worker Caes David Gruesbeck died from blunt force injuries he suffered during an accident involving an overhead conveyor at the Fort Wayne, Indiana fulfillment center.

Although there has been no official report from the company or the government authorities as to what happened to the young worker, Amazon corporate management reopened the facility after closing it for just two days.

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