

19-year-old Amazon worker found dead near South Carolina fulfillment center

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A teenager employed at an Amazon warehouse in Lexington County, South Carolina was reported missing November 30. On December 13, 19-year-old Jerrold George Dejean was found in a retention pond a short distance from the CAE1 Amazon Fulfillment Center entrance where he was last seen.

Jerrold's mother, Amanda Faver, who reported him missing and for two weeks sought answers from the company and law enforcement, told local television station WISTV that her son had worked at Amazon for only five months.

The young man pulled ten-and-a-half-hour shifts overnight in the warehouse. He was the second of five brothers and worked to help support the family at their home in Gaston. Faver said she drove her son to work every day, dropping him off at 6:30 in the evening and picking him up at 5:00 in the morning.

"I dropped him off like a normal day," she said. "I told him, 'Baby, have a good day, I love you, and I'll see you in the morning.' Dropped him off, he went to work, I came there at 4:55 to pick him up. Five o'clock, he wasn't there, 5:05... 5:30 I finally went inside, and they told me he wasn't there."

Faver said the local sheriff's department informed her that her son was last seen leaving the warehouse at 12:30 on the night of November 30, throwing his work vest on the ground, and running away.

"They told me he ran off from the building that morning," Faver explained. "They told me before he ran off, they offered him counseling, but they wouldn't tell me why. Nobody's giving me any answers."

In a statement provided to the *Lexington County Chronicle* newspaper, Amazon spokesperson Branden Baribeau said, "We're saddened by this terrible tragedy, and our deepest sympathies are with his family and loved ones. We're working to support them and

our employees at CAE1 during this difficult time. We're also cooperating with law enforcement to support their investigation." The *Chronicle* reported that Baribeau did not answer the paper's questions about Dejean's employment at the warehouse.

Coworkers, commenting anonymously on Reddit, said they were not told any details beyond an announcement by management during a brief stand-up meeting that a body had been found on the property.

Amazon facilities monitor every movement of workers by camera and computer. Given the wall-to-wall surveillance, both inside and outside the warehouses, it is not plausible that Amazon management had no information about what happened to Jerrold Dejean on the night he went missing.

The fact that his mother was told he was "offered counseling" suggests that supervisors on shift were aware of a crisis unfolding and did not act in a way that might have helped locate Jerrold sooner, perhaps even preventing his death.

Like many in rural South Carolina, the family is struggling financially. His mother set up a Go-Fund-Me to help cover funeral expenses, explaining: "I am humbly asking our community to please help this mother of 5 young boys ranging from the age of 3 to 22 who just lost her son Jerrold Dejean tragically at the age of 19, to be able to lay him to rest properly. None of us are ever prepared to bury our children especially at such a young age and at Christmas time. If you can help in any way your support would be very much appreciated."

With revenue of \$513.98 billion in 2022, Amazon is by far the world's largest online retailer. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos sits on a fortune of \$169.7 billion. In October, the company reported third-quarter profits had more than tripled from last year's \$2.9 billion, to

\$9.9 billion. As profits swelled, the company cut 27,000 employees, further ratcheting up the exploitation of its workforce ahead of the holiday shopping season.

Serious or fatal accidents, suicides and mental health breakdowns are common in the warehouses. By federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimates, accidents at Amazon warehouses are 70 percent higher than at other similar facilities. According to OSHA, there were 6.6 serious injuries per 100 Amazon workers in 2022; a survey by the University of Illinois Chicago released October 25 found 41 percent of Amazon workers are injured after three years on the job.

On May 8, 20-year-old Caes Gruesbeck was crushed in a package conveyor at a distribution center in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The company was fined an obscenely low \$7,000 for the young worker's death—approximately what Jeff Bezos accumulates in wealth every 30 seconds—an amount that Amazon has fought tooth and nail to avoid paying.

Amazon workers, we want to hear from you. What do you think about the death of Jerrold Dejean in Gaston? What are conditions like in your own warehouse? Let us know by filling out the form below. All submissions will remain anonymous.



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