

“The system is rigged against the working class”: US postal workers describe overwork, exhaustion caused by Amazon package delivery

Our reporters
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An article last month in the World Socialist Web Site, exposing how the US Post Office is increasingly functioning as a delivery service for Amazon in rural areas, has been widely read among US postal workers. Dozens of USPS workers around country wrote in response to describe the impact which the overwhelming Amazon workloads are having at their facilities.

We reproduce a selection of these letters below, edited for length and clarity. If you work for USPS and want to speak out about conditions at the Post Office, fill out the form below to contact the WSWWS. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

A rural carrier from Colorado: The Rural Regular Carriers are working 12-hour shifts right now at our office. However, the [lower tier] RCA's are mandated to come in at 6 AM, and we have been getting off after Midnight. Some of us live about an hour away from the office. Working six days a week like this with less than four hours of sleep a night is crazy. Then we are getting yelled at by the Postmaster, that if we don't finish delivering everything, that we also must work on Sundays too, which means no days off at all. This is inhumane treatment.

Some of us started wearing diapers to work, since our Postmaster has pointed out that there are no bathroom breaks listed in the rural carriers labor contract. To use the bathroom we have to clock out for our 30-minute lunch break, since that is the only break time we are allowed per our contract. So we are working an 18-hour non-stop shift, and we are being forced to choose between eating and going to the bathroom.

One of the RCA's in our office slipped on an icy driveway on a snowy day. This fall caused her to break her right foot. When she called the office to report that she was in extreme pain and couldn't walk or drive, the Postmaster told her that she had to keep going to finish the route. She was forced to continue working for 4 more hours on her broken foot. When she got back to the office, she was crying from the excruciating pain and had been crying the whole time. Her foot was so swollen that she couldn't even get her shoe off. The Postmaster was

extremely mean and rude to the RCA, because her injury meant that the Postmaster had to actually do some work and fill out paperwork. ...

The cruel, inhumane, lawbreaking treatment didn't stop there. This RCA is a single mom of two school-aged children and lives on the 3rd floor of an apartment building. The Postmaster told her that if they offer her work and she turns it down, then workers' comp wouldn't pay her at all. The RCA's doctors note says sitting duties only, so the Postmaster has been forcing her to run errands all over the building, carrying tubs of mail, throwing packages, etc. ... The Post Office is destroying this family's life and wrecking their Christmas, all while torturing this poor RCA by forcing her to do things that physically hurt her.

How is this legal? Why does the government get away with doing this to people? Look at how the government treats its own workers. How can we trust them to take care of the country when this is how they treat their citizens?

A letter carrier from Alabama: Amazon packages are a headache. We were going in at 7 am to start running packages, then we come back to start delivering mail *plus* packages. We are understaffed and were told 12 hours was mandatory this holiday season. I was doing over 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Even on your one day off, you had to get up and go to work. Next year something needs to be done.

A postal worker from Fort Worth, Texas: In about 2013, or whenever USPS started delivering Amazon, there was a very bad weather day that was undeliverable. But managers told us to deliver Amazon no matter what, even if we had Priority packages as well. So anyone in postal management that says Amazon didn't take priority over everything else is not being honest.

All these hand-off parcels from FedEx and UPS are killing morale due to the overwhelming amount of parcels to deliver, especially during holidays. The heat in summer in Texas doesn't help, or the poor heaters in winter.

A rural carrier from Tennessee: There are multiple offices here that are completely overburdened. I was a rural carrier in [three locations] and all offices have RCAs (rural carrier assistants) working 6 days a week and 12 to 14 hours a day year round. Time off isn't approved. If you call out you are threatened and called lazy. Career rural carries at one location are forced to work 6 days a week year round.

A rural carrier from South Carolina: This story is absolutely true everywhere nationwide. The subs are quitting because they are being sent from their home offices to offices in cities they have never been in. That causes even more delays. New people are sometimes thrown out on a route with no training.

More than 60 percent of the routes are highly overburdened and not properly counted, causing workers to be underpaid. In addition, carriers are being made to deliver the heaviest packages. It's crazy. A route that is 60 hours long gets paid the max of 48 hours. The stipend for mileage doesn't even cover gas money, never mind vehicle maintenance. This used to be a great job.

A letter carrier from New Hampshire: I work for the post office in New Hampshire, and there are a number of post offices that can't keep new hires. This is because they're overwhelmed with the amount of work and the hours they're required to put in. What's more is that as a rural carrier, you could work 13 to 14 hours, but if the route is rated for 9 and a half, you only get paid 9 and a half. The only exception to that has been the first of January, where they changed to a straight hourly rate because so many people were either getting sick or calling out or leaving.

A lot of people have retired, because we're told every day we go in that Amazon packages are more important than the mail. My frustration is the people that have bought the stamps have paid for the service and Amazon should not take priority over that. On one route I worked on recently, the mail had not been delivered for 3 days, and the postmaster there is trying to get me to come back on my days off because he has multiple routes that have no mail carriers. That is common throughout the post office, and it all is because Amazon is crushing the job. We used to love being mail carriers, and now all we are all package people.

A rural carrier from Minnesota: At our office, unless you have a doctor's note, we are working a minimum 60 hour work week, and we have been for going on five years. This is solely because of Amazon. We can't keep any new folks because they can be worked 84.5 hours a week, meaning they hardly ever make it through their probationary period before they quit. The management tells folks they aren't prioritizing Amazon, which is a complete crock. It doesn't matter how many full routes of mail are left behind in our office as long as all the Amazon is delivered. Then to get the mail delivered, they just force everyone in on Sunday to deliver mail plus Amazon. I have to agree that Postmaster General Louis Dejoy is making us look as

horrible as possible so he can privatize USPS and sell us to the highest bidder—which would probably be Amazon. That's my two cents.

A rural carrier from Iowa: I have been working six days a week for the past five to six months, and I do not see an end in sight. Like other carriers have said, they can't get anyone to work, and those that do quit within a few weeks or months because they are worked like animals.

Our pay is not even close to what UPS workers are getting, but we are also having to deliver their packages too. We are told to do more in less time—and 'oh, by the way, make sure you're safe,' they add. But I have been delivering out of a vehicle whose wipers have not worked in months, and the turn signals have not been working for even longer. The list goes on.

We are not given bathroom breaks, as that would take time away from deliveries. And don't even get me started on the required 10-minute breaks that we are entitled to but can't take, lest we get asked why we were stationary for more than 45 seconds.

A rural carrier from Northern California: I've never been treated with such disrespect as I have at the post office. Management has no problem destroying our bodies and our personal lives for their own gain. We do the job that matters, and they take all the credit. They work 8-hour days in the office, while we work 10 and 12 hours in the elements.

Want a vacation or time with your family? Too bad. The mail is more important. They break the rules, manipulate our paychecks and nothing happens to them. They make bad decisions constantly, and we suffer the consequences. Then, if we speak up, we get in trouble.

We are working wage slaves to management. We are nothing but numbers to them. I've been there 6 years as an RCA and make the same as a new hire, while expected to do double the work. I'm still not a regular [employee]. Once I do get promoted to regular, I can't buy back my time so these six years don't count towards service or retirement.

The system is rigged against the working class. We can do our job without them, but without us they wouldn't have a job.



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