

UPS workers sleeping in parking lots between split shifts after job cuts at New York hub

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UPS workers: How have you or your coworkers been affected by layoffs? Fill out the form below to let us know. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Package delivery giant UPS is in the midst of a massive restructuring at the cost of tens of thousands of jobs. Under the so-called “Network of the Future” plan, at least 200 facilities across the United States will be closed or automated. Approximately 80 percent of inside jobs are at risk of being automated out of existence.

UPS management cites the “labor certainty” of the new Teamsters contract ratified last year as key to their ambitions. The Teamsters bureaucracy, under General President Sean O’Brien, pushed through that deal under false pretenses, calling it “historic” while concealing the mass layoffs being planned, and which began before the ink dried on the new deal.

Workers have formed the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee to fight against the job cuts. In a statement published in January, the Committee proposed a three-point strategy. “First, the maximum initiative must remain in the hands of rank-and-file workers ... We insist we have the right and the duty to take all actions which we deem necessary to defend our jobs, regardless of whether the bureaucracy sanctions them or not.

“Second, we must reject the ‘right’ of UPS and other corporations to a profit at our expense ... Their domination over society must be ended if we are to make any headway in defense of jobs and living standards. This requires the public ownership of UPS and other huge corporations, run democratically by workers themselves as public utilities.

“Third, we must unite with workers in logistics and other industries around the US and the world. Everywhere the policies of the major multinational

corporations are the same: endless job and wage cuts to pay for profits, and for wars in defense of profits. We must meet their global strategy with a global movement uniting workers across all countries in defense of our common interests.”

In New York City, hundreds of jobs are being axed through shift closures. “I know there are workers now working split shifts, and sleeping in their cars at night in the parking lot,” a worker at Maspeth told the WSWS earlier this year.

The announcement in May of 66 layoffs at the Maspeth hub provoked outrage from the rank-and-file, with many wondering whether it would lead to the end of the midnight sorting shift. This was quickly confirmed: It was reported later in the *Chief* newspaper that 120 full-time positions were being cut on the Maspeth night shift.

According to the *Chief*, these worker would be given the desperate choice of working split shifts to keep their full-time status. The alternative was to be downgraded from full-time to a part-time status.

The WSWS recently spoke with Maspeth workers about the impact of the layoffs.

One worker said, “This has worn on us for months. The split shift workers have a choice of going home or camping outside. Most hang out in the building. They try to hang there, find a place and get some sleep time. But the company drives them out. They tell UPS workers they have to be out of the building. They give them warnings or time down or escort them out of the building. At first they just give you warnings to get out.

“Then you end up sleeping in your car or in the rough if you take public transportation. You need to go home and sleep, but for everyone here, it takes about an hour and a half to travel home. Double that to travel back even if there is public transportation, and you have used

up all the split shift travelling back and forth; so you can't do that."

"The biggest thing for us now is the lack of manpower through the entire hub, because they are not hiring new people for the peak time. So that puts more pressure on us. They now expect quality work from you like you are a supervisor. A lot of people have left because they cannot live working split shifts. Others have left because they can't live on half a paycheck. And the union has just gotten worse since the local elections this spring because they don't know what they are doing."

A part-time UPS sketched out his erratic work schedule. "For me, I start my first four-hour shift at 6:30 in the evening, then take a six-hour 'lunch' and return at 4 in the morning for another four hours. It is too far to travel home and back for that 'lunch' so I stay in my car in the parking lot. That needs to change."

A full-time worker told the WSWS, "I was laid off from the midnight shift, and it is a bad idea. We can't get enough hours to sleep [between split shifts], and that is a pretty bad situation."

Another midnight shift worker commented, "At the end of the day, it is horrible. I was part-time [when the layoffs were announced], so I didn't have to choose whether to start working the split shifts or lose full-time status. But now I often lose a shift a day, cutting my pay is cut in half or get two shifts scheduled far apart, so I can't work a regular 8-hour day."

Drivers expressed outrage about the conditions facing warehouse workers. "It is horrible," another said. "Everything is so horrible. Take the split shifts. They are horrible and unnecessary."

Another commented, "It affects us drivers as well, because the loaders aren't where they should be in the morning. The split shifts are horrible."

However, one driver reported that after the spring layoff, "there was less work and less pay" for drivers.

Another said about five drivers had been laid off at Maspeth months ago.

The cuts have also had an impact on the public. "They got rid of Customer Service about two or three months ago," he explained, "I have customers who use it and need it for late deliveries because they have pre-made labels. People come here after hours and double park right on the street across from the main gate. That

is dangerous, but then they stand and block drivers from going in, which is more dangerous.

"Sometimes there are two or three people here when you return, sometimes in front of the truck in the dark where you can't see very well. They are there right now, and they will stop you and plead with you to take their late delivery packages and make sure they get out in tomorrow's deliveries. It makes no sense and is dangerous to us and our customers that they have closed down Customer Service at Maspeth."



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