

Amazon worker details pattern of sexual harassment, management retaliation and physical abuse

Samuel Davidson
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Work at Amazon or another unsafe workplace? Are you being harassed or retaliated against for speaking out? Expose what is happening by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

A worker at an Amazon fulfillment center in Ohio recently spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site* to detail a pattern of sexual harassment, management retaliation, and physical abuse leading to injury, a story that has become all too familiar for Amazon workers.

We are referring to her as Susan instead of using her real name. We are also leaving out certain details specific to her case in order to protect her from further retaliation by management.

Susan's story of harassment, and retaliation on the part of Amazon management when she reported this harassment, is similar to reports filed by workers at other fulfillment centers. Susan's story also exposes the failure of various government agencies that were established ostensibly to protect workers from harassment and retaliation, including the courts.

Susan's story began almost four years ago when she took a job at an Amazon warehouse to provide for herself and her family. Like other fulfillment centers, the one she worked at in Ohio was large and fast-paced, employing hundreds of workers around the clock to process hundreds of thousands of items each day and load them onto trucks for delivery to customers or for shipment to other distribution centers.

The work is hard and fast, with workers having to lift, reach, bend, and twist hundreds of packages each hour—some weighing as much as 100 pounds. It was in this demanding environment that Susan's ordeal began.

Trouble started just two months after Susan began working, when an assistant manager began making unwelcome sexual advances, including harassing statements and inappropriate touching.

"Two months after starting, I began getting harassed by an assistant manager. Sexually harassed, pinched my shoulder. I filed multiple complaints. Nothing ever happened. They have policies and rules. When I filed a complaint, that assistant manager (I don't know how) obtained copies of my statement. I went to HR and got mad, asking 'Why aren't you investigating?' Apparently, he has connections to HR. He went around making me look bad."

Fellow workers told Susan that the assistant manager was trying to collect letters from them against her as retaliation for her complaints.

"He knew every time I went to HR," said Susan. "This guy was stalking me everywhere."

Her situation worsened as other managers joined in the retaliation. "Another manager came, and one day she made a comment about Hispanics. I went to HR and asked if this is right. After that, she used her power to make my life miserable every day."

The female manager began targeting Susan with punitive work assignments. "She used to put me on work in heavy areas by myself when in my work area you are supposed to have more employees. Some of my

co-workers saw the heavyweight volume of work I was getting and they tried to help me, but the management told them to stay away from my area or they would be in trouble."

When Susan raised concerns about the physical demands, management's response was dismissive. At "Amazon, you have to bend, lift, twist," was the reply she got Susan explained. "They said just quit if you can't do it."

The abuse escalated beyond work assignments. "Another time I was working in an area where a chemical detergent broke and started leaking around the belt that goes around. It got on me from head down. I was under the area doing my job, my eyes started hurting and I ran to the bathroom to wash my face.

"I went to my manager and asked if I could go home to clean up and she said no 'You can't go home or you'll be terminated if you leave without permission.'"

Despite the mounting harassment, Susan continued to go to HR to seek an end to the victimization. "I made a complaint for retaliation. An investigation was opened and they found a violation. But the manager was in control of every manager on the floor. She wanted to make sure they all did what she wanted."

The female manager directed the other supervisors to intensify Susan's mistreatment. Susan said the manager told the other managers to "make her life miserable."

And they did. "For two years, my life was miserable. Bullying, sexual harassment," Susan recounted.

The harassment reached a terrifying climax in October 2023, when the original assistant manager, who had sexually harassed Susan, made a direct threat against her life. "Then in October 2023, the assistant manager who used to sexually harass me, said 'I would shoot you but not kill you.'

"I freaked out, I messaged one of the big bosses. He refused to come to me. I was shaking and crying and afraid and said I have to get out of here.

"One of the guards saw me crying and asked me if I was ok and I said, 'I have to get out of here' and I walked out. I messaged the HR manager on the same day. An investigation was opened and a violation was found, as before."

Yet nothing substantial occurred even after the death threat. "They suspended someone for a week, but that manager is still there as are the others involved," Susan said.

The impact of the work and the stress of threats and harassment was taking a severe toll on Susan's health. "My body was shutting down on me. I was getting sick, heart issues, and anxieties. They denied me workers' comp. What HR did, ignore every single time I came asking for help and never investigated when I asked."

The situation came to a head when Susan's supervisors cornered her at work. "They cornered me and I ran out and went to the ER. They said I had extreme stress. I took off all of November 2023."

Susan's injuries from the prolonged harassment and demanding physical work were extensive. She was placed on anxiety medications for stress-related conditions. Her shoulder and neck were hurt and she was placed on physical therapy. She lost strength in her left arm. Damage to her left ear canal gives her dizziness.

Susan's experience with workplace injuries reflects a broader pattern at Amazon facilities. Injuries at Amazon warehouses are common, as the pace of work, the heavy lifting, bending and twisting leads to thousands of injuries each year. Among the most common health and safety problems are musculoskeletal injuries, with workers frequently reporting strains and sprains, especially in the back and shoulders, due to repetitive lifting, bending, and twisting. OSHA investigations have confirmed high rates of these injuries at multiple facilities.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited Amazon for unsafe conditions at several warehouses, but this has led to very few fines and what fines there are, Amazon considers just the cost of doing business.

Amazon's injury statistics tell the story of a dangerous workplace. In 2019, Amazon's injury rate rose to 8.7 per 100 full-time workers, up from under 6 in 2016. In 2020, it dropped to 6.7 per 100 full-time workers, possibly due to pandemic-related operational changes. In 2023, it stood at 6.3 per 100 full-time workers.

Amazon's injury rates remain among the highest in the warehousing sector. Amazon's injury rate remained 1.5 times higher than TJX (T.J. Maxx, Marshalls) and nearly 3 times higher than Walmart. Many workers feel the real injury rate is still higher and that many workers don't report injuries for fear of retaliation, including termination.

Heat-related injuries and illness are another common problem at Amazon warehouses and fulfillment centers, although this was not part of Susan's particular experience. Many Amazon facilities, particularly older ones or those in hot regions, have inadequate ventilation or air conditioning. Workers have reported extreme indoor temperatures, sometimes exceeding 100° Fahrenheit, especially in places like San Bernardino, California. There have been multiple reports of heat-related illnesses, including dehydration and heat stroke. In one high-profile case, a worker at a New Jersey warehouse died during a heat wave.

While Susan was off work recovering, her ordeal continued. She felt she was being followed in an effort to prove she wasn't really injured. She also received threatening text messages, emails and voicemail messages. She took these to the police but they claimed they were never able to find out who sent them.

When Susan returned to work, the harassment continued unabated. She submitted Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) paperwork, signed by her doctor and submitted to Amazon that limited the lifting she could do.

But even her doctor's orders were ignored. "When I was on the floor for a half day," Susan explained, "I got a phone call, which I didn't answer on the floor. At lunchtime, the voicemail said I had to leave the floor because the accommodation was being revoked."

"I called the number during my lunchtime and they said it was denied because the senior operations manager denied it."

Susan pointed out that there are many elderly workers and others with disabilities who can't get accommodations from Amazon. She says they fear filing for FMLA because they would get harassed and ultimately lose their jobs.

Susan's experience with harassment and retaliation is not unique. Harassment, and retaliation against employees who report harassment, is frequent at Amazon's workplaces. Some widely publicized cases include a group of African American workers at an Amazon facility in Joliet, Illinois, who were being racially attacked and when they complained and requested that additional security be added to their work site, they were told they could go home. Other cases include workers at New York City facilities who sought to organize into a union and were themselves

retaliated against for seeking to organize.

Like many workers, Susan went to the various government bodies who are charged with protecting workers against workplace abuse, only to discover that these agencies offer little meaningful help.

Susan went to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to no avail. "What aggravated me was, what is EEOC even for? They just give you a 'right to sue' letter."

Susan went to the Ohio government offices and got the same results. Susan tried to sue in court, but the attorney she hired stopped answering her calls after initially taking her case.

As a result of losing income, Susan has been forced to move in with a friend.

Despite everything she has endured, Susan maintains her determination to speak out about the conditions at Amazon and the broader failures of the systems that are supposed to protect workers.

"I feel bad for what's going on around the world; workplaces like Amazon facilities can be very toxic and stressful because of the lack of a management system. Rules, Policies and Guidelines should be reviewed and put in place for the safety of employees.

She spoke about the April 9, 2025 death of Leony Salcedo-Chevalier, 34, who was fatally struck by a delivery box truck backing up in a loading dock at the JFK8 Amazon fulfillment center in Staten Island, New York.

"The Salcedo death was a bad situation that could've been prevented if there was more safety involved. Amazon does have a safety department. But I only see them seated all the time. This department never goes around to assure the safety of Amazon employees.

"So absolutely this situation shouldn't happen and the death of the employee shouldn't be ignored."

Susan wanted to emphasize that it was necessary for Amazon workers to unite together and fight back.

"Employees have the right to be safe and healthy in every workplace. They should be treated equally and respectfully.

"Favoritism, discrimination, sexual harassment, retaliation, bullying, injuries of any type and any other harmful workplace should be evaluated and they should provide better assistance and support to those needed; it should never be ignored.

"What happened to me, it has happened to other people.

"I call and seek justice for what I went through. Please listen."

To fight these conditions, build rank and file committees to link up the struggle at your facility with Amazon and other workers both around the country and around the world. To find out more, fill out the form below.



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