500,000 Amazon jobs on chopping block due to automation in next few years

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Amazon workers, join the fight against mass layoffs! Fill out the form below for more information about how to build a rank-and-file committee at your workplace.

Amazon is planning to use advances in automation to replace half a million jobs in the next several years, according to internal documents acquired by the *New York Times*. This represents nearly half of Amazon's current workforce in the United States, around 1.1 million people.

The move marks an accelerating jobs bloodbath, with rapid advances in automation and artificial intelligence being weaponized to eliminate entire sections of the workforce. The impact is not confined to lower-wage, blue-collar jobs, but also includes office employees. The company already cut 27,000 jobs in 2022 and 2023 and recently announced another 1,500 global job cuts in its human resources division.

The potential impact is stark. According to the *Times*, Amazon's ultimate goal is to automate 75 percent of its operations. "Amazon is so convinced this automated future is around the corner that it has started developing plans to mitigate the fallout in communities that may lose jobs," the paper reports. In other words, the company is engaging in public relations damage control by throwing a few dollars at "community events such as parades and Toys for Tots."

An experimental facility in Shreveport, Louisiana, provides a glimpse of what is to come. "Once an item there is in a package, a human barely touches it again. The company uses a thousand robots in Shreveport, allowing it to employ a quarter fewer workers last year than it would have without automation, documents show." The *Times* continues: "Next year, as more robots are introduced, it expects to employ about half as many workers there as it would without automation."

The pace of this transformation is extremely rapid. "Amazon plans to copy the Shreveport design in about 40 facilities by the end of 2027, starting with a massive warehouse that just opened in Virginia Beach." By 2033, even though the company expects to sell twice as many products, automation will lead to 600,000 fewer hirings than would otherwise have been needed.

Amazon has long been the poster child for low-wage, high-tech exploitation. Its distribution centers were among the first to use robotics and electronic tracking to force workers to "make rate." Many workers who have spoken with the *World Socialist Web Site* in recent years have described being injured on the job and then denied workers' compensation.

These methods have helped Amazon grow massively to become the second-largest employer in the United States, after Walmart. The new wave of cuts will devastate communities where the company's distribution centers have become a primary source of employment, especially in deindustrialized towns where Amazon has moved in to take advantage of a desperate job market. According to the company, 40 percent of its warehouse workforce is located in small towns, defined as having fewer than 50,000 people.

Amazon's methods have been widely adopted throughout corporate America. The use of such technologies is referred to in boardrooms as "Amazonization."

A similar overhaul is already underway among its competitors in the logistics sector. Last year, UPS rolled out its "Network of the Future" program, using automation to eliminate up to 80 percent of warehouse labor at 200 facilities. This began only months after the ratification of a new contract with the Teamsters, whose bureaucrats remained totally silent on the danger. Since then, they have hardly even mentioned the program, despite thousands of layoffs already underway.

UPS had earlier announced it would lay off 20,000 and shutter 73 facilities in the first half of 2025 alone.

A comparable initiative is the "Delivering for America" program by the US Postal Service, which is consolidating operations into a small number of highly automated distribution hubs. Similar programs are being pushed through by postal systems across the world.

The scale and speed of automation's impact are staggering. Ford CEO Jim Farley recently declared that AI will "replace literally half of all white-collar workers."

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The World Economic Forum estimates that about 92 million jobs worldwide will be displaced by emerging technologies by 2030. Goldman Sachs projects that 300 million full-time jobs could be exposed to automation, and the McKinsey Global Institute predicts that 30 percent of US job hours could be automated by the end of the decade. The International Monetary Fund warns that one of the biggest impacts will be a massive increase in inequality, both within societies and between rich and poor countries, with the latter less able to adopt new technologies.

The question is not the technology itself, but who controls it. Under a rational and humane social system, automation could be used to vastly improve access to necessary goods, shorten the working day with no loss in pay, and fund pensions, healthcare and other social needs.

But under capitalism, it is being used as an instrument of class warfare on a vast scale. These new technologies are being deployed to intensify exploitation in anticipation of another global recession and new economic crises caused, in the final analysis, by the massive and uncontrolled growth of financial speculation. Ever greater sources of surplus value are being drawn from the working class to keep financial bubbles from bursting.

Artificial intelligence itself has become a major financial bubble, with "circular deals" such as those between Nvidia and ChatGPT worth billions of dollars. Projected investments in computing power are expected to reach $720 billion by the end of the decade. New power plants are being built from scratch to serve individual data facilities, each consuming as much electricity as small cities.

The inevitability of financial collapse is so great that Jeff Bezos recently penned a commentary claiming that bubbles are "good." The costs, inevitably, are borne by the working class through mass unemployment and deteriorating working conditions. This year has already seen a series of explosions and other accidents at industrial plants caused by overwork, neglect, and unsafe conditions.

AI and automation are also being harnessed to ramp up military production in preparation for war with China, plans that have been in development for years. Tariffs are being used to redirect supply chains away from the South China Sea to prepare for such a conflict.

No other company personifies the character of the United States as a corporate oligarchy more than Amazon and its chairman, Jeff Bezos, currently the world's fourth-richest person with a net "worth" of $234 billion, according to *Forbes*. Through Amazon, Bezos exercises personal control over vast and crucial sections of the economy. Through his ownership of the *Washington Post*, whose opinion page was purged this year under his direction, he promotes reactionary calls for massive austerity and imperialist wars across the globe.

Bezos also maintains a personal relationship with Trump. He is among the tech billionaires contributing to the $300 million demolition of the White House's East Wing and the building of a massive, gilded ballroom. A representative of Bezos attended an event with Trump in the under-construction ballroom, where Trump celebrated their wealth. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman gushed: "Thank you for being such a pro-business, pro-innovation president. It's a very refreshing change."

This alliance underscores that the fascist dictatorship which Trump is attempting to build is in defense of the corporate oligarchy. Trump has slashed upwards of 300,000 federal workers and furloughed the government workforce for three weeks during the recent shutdown. Many federal employees are now lining up at food banks.

The levels of inequality and social misery now being produced are incompatible with democracy. The rational use of technology is impossible under the capitalist system of private ownership. It requires the expropriation of Amazon and other major corporations and their transformation into democratically controlled public utilities, run by the working class in the interests of society as a whole. Bezos and the other oligarchs must be expropriated, not only to make trillions available for social spending but also to remove the primary constituency for fascism.

In every Amazon warehouse workers must build new organizations of working class opposition, rank-and-file committees, linked across industries and borders by the International Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), to organize the fight to defend every job. The movement of the working class in defense of jobs must be connected to the defense of democratic rights. This is what the Socialist Equality Party is fighting to build.

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