

At least 7 dead, 11 injured after UPS cargo plane crashes in Louisville

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At least seven people are dead and 11 injured, including two in critical condition, after a UPS cargo jet crashed and exploded into flames Tuesday evening shortly after takeoff from Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport (SDF). The fiery crash leveled two industrial businesses and sent a towering black plume over the city, forcing a shelter-in-place order, closure of all Louisville schools and the grounding of all flights in and out of the airport.

According to the online flight tracker Flightradar24, the McDonnell Douglas MD-11, operating as UPS Flight 2976 from Louisville, Kentucky, to Honolulu, lifted off at 5:14 p.m. ET, climbing only 175 feet before sharply descending. Seconds later, it burst into flames as more than 200,000 pounds of jet fuel, or about 29,000 gallons, ignited into an enormous explosion.

Footage broadcast by local media showed one of the jet's engines on fire as it moved down the runway, then erupted into a fireball moments after leaving the ground. Debris and secondary fires stretched nearly a mile through nearby warehouses and storage lots.

One worker told the *World Socialist Web Site* she could see the black plume from her apartment nearly ten miles away.

The scale of the disaster, in the words of Governor Andy Beshear, was “unlike anything our city has experienced in decades.”

At least two neighboring businesses were in the path of the crash. Kentucky Petroleum Recycling, which handles used lubricating oil, hydraulic oil, transmission fluid and diesel fuel, took a direct hit.

Nearby, Grade A Auto Parts sustained catastrophic damage, at least two employees remain unaccounted for and it is uncertain how many customers were in the store when the business was hit.

UPS confirmed extensive damage to its IT building

and parts of the Worldport complex, a 5.2-million-square-foot facility, the size of 90 football fields, that processes more than 300 flights a day and 2 million packages daily under normal conditions.

As horrific as the disaster is, it could easily have been much worse, since thousands of people work at Worldport and other nearby facilities. Ford's Louisville Assembly Plant is located only a few hundred yards from the crash; autoworkers reported to the WSWs that power went out at the facility. CSX also maintains a large railyard adjacent to the runway.

Although a five-mile shelter-in-place order has been reduced to a one-mile perimeter of the disaster area, Jefferson County Public Schools and the University of Louisville announced that all classes are cancelled for Wednesday, November 5.

The downed MD-11 was 34 years old and was brought into service by UPS in 2006. UPS has pledged to retire the model over the next decade, yet dozens remain in nightly service. The MD-11 type has been involved in several fatal cargo accidents.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have dispatched investigators, though Louisville Metro Police Chief Paul Humphrey said the site remains too dangerous to access due to “extensive wreckage, heat, and unstable debris.”

In its official statement Tuesday night, UPS released the customary statement of sympathy, declaring it was “committed to the safety of our employees, our customers and the communities we serve.” These are empty sentiments. Only weeks ago, Shelma Reyna Guerrero, a 23-year-old worker, was killed while loading packages at a UPS facility in Richmond, California, a tragedy that exposed the deadly consequences of overwork and speed-up.

At the same time, the company has eliminated tens of thousands of jobs this year as part of cost-cutting demanded by Wall Street, intensifying workloads and undermining safety across its global network.

The Teamsters bureaucracy responded on X (formerly Twitter):

“Prayers on behalf of our entire International Union are with those killed, injured, and affected...”

But the Teamsters have helped UPS to destroy tens of thousands of jobs by forcing through a new contract in 2023. Mass layoffs under the company’s “Network of the Future” automation program began soon after, with the Teamsters maintaining a guilty silence. Meanwhile, General President Sean O’Brien has emerged as a top union ally of the Trump administration.

More information will emerge in the coming days about what led to the crash. But what can be said with certainty is that the Louisville crash emerges in the context of decaying infrastructure, relentless cost-cutting and government deregulation across the transportation and logistics industries.

It is only the latest in a recent series of deadly explosions and fires at US industrial sites:

- **November 3—Artesia, New Mexico:** An explosion and fire at the HF Sinclair Navajo refinery sent thick smoke over the city and injured three people who were taken for medical attention.

- **October 11—Humphreys County, Tennessee:** A massive explosion at a munitions/explosives manufacturing plant produced a catastrophic blast which leveled the facility and killed 16 people.

- **October 3—El Segundo, California:** A fire broke out in a jet-fuel/isomax unit at Chevron’s El Segundo refinery, producing visible flames and smoke in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, 14 miles away.

- **August 21, 2025—Keenesburg, Colorado:** Six workers died at a dairy farm after exposure to a toxic gas.

- **August 11—Clairton (near Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania:** An explosion at U.S. Steel’s Clairton coke works caused multiple blasts, killed at least two workers and injured 10 others.

- **July 29—Fremont, Nebraska:** Multiple explosions and a large fire at the Horizon Biofuels (wood-products/biofuels) facility killed three people (an operator and two children) and heavily damaged the plant.

- **July 1—Esparto, California:** Seven workers were killed in an explosion which leveled a fireworks factory.

The fight for safe working conditions cannot be left to corporations, regulators, or the pro-company union bureaucrats. UPS workers, pilots and logistics employees must organize independent rank-and-file committees—linked with those in manufacturing, rail, and the chemical industries—to demand full transparency about maintenance and safety, the immediate shutdown of unsafe equipment, and the democratic control of workplace conditions by workers themselves.



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