

“They are not doing the proper maintenance on the planes”: Louisville UPS workers speak out on fatal jet crash

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Lack of maintenance and the push for profits were among the causes for the November 4 crash of a UPS cargo plane that killed 14 people, according to several UPS workers who work at the Louisville, Kentucky, hub and who spoke confidentially with the *World Socialist Web Site*.

UPS Airlines Flight 2976 crashed on November 4, 2025 at approximately 5:13 p.m. local time, shortly after takeoff from UPS Worldport at Louisville’s Muhammad Ali International Airport.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), which issued a preliminary report Thursday, said a bracket, known as a pylon that connected the left engine to the wing, was cracked in two places before the crash. The NTSB found “evidence of fatigue cracks” and “areas of overstress failure” in the left pylon and other areas, the report said.

Still photos from an airport surveillance video show the left engine breaking off and the wing catching fire shortly after takeoff. The NTSB said a similar separation of a left engine and pylon during takeoff led to the crash of American Airlines Flight 191 at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport in 1979. All 271 passengers on the McDonnell Douglas DC-10 were killed, along with two victims on the ground, in the deadliest aviation disaster in the US.

After losing its left engine, the UPS plane, a McDonnell Douglas MD-11BCF cargo jet, which never rose above 30 feet, suddenly banked sharply to the left before crashing into an industrial area near the airport. Carrying 38,000 gallons of fuel for the flight to Hawaii, the jet struck a UPS supply chain warehouse roof and fuel tanks at a nearby recycling company, causing a massive fire and explosions.

A total of 14 people were killed in the crash, the deadliest in UPS Airlines history.

The three flight crew members who were killed were:

- Captain Richard Wartenberg, 57
- First Officer Lee Truitt, 45
- International Relief Officer Captain Dana Diamond, 62

The 11 people killed on the ground were:

- Angela Anderson, 45
- Louisnes Fedon, 47

- Kimberly Asa, 3 (granddaughter of Louisnes Fedon)
- Trinadette “Trina” Chavez, 37
- Tony Crain, 65
- Carlos Fernandez, 52
- John Loucks, 52
- John Spray, 45
- Matthew Sweets, 37
- Megan Washburn, 35
- Ella Petty Whorton, 31

Most of the ground victims were reportedly employees or customers at the Grade A Auto Parts & Recycling business, which was hit by the plane.

The MD-11BCF plane was 34 years old. It was first delivered in 1991 to Thai Airways International and in 2006 converted from a passenger jet to a cargo freighter and sold to UPS.

Before the fatal crash, it had been at a San Antonio, Texas, maintenance facility for six weeks (from September 3 to October 18, 2025) for a “heavy check,” a thorough inspection that includes test flights. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) records show the plane was being serviced for several issues, including a crack on a structural piece inside the center wing upper fuel tank that required a permanent repair. Corrosion was also found in the plane’s center cargo bilge area.

According to the NTSB, the pylon mounts were last inspected five years ago. UPS maintenance schedule only requires them to be inspected once every six years. Some of the other parts were not due to be inspected until the plane had 28,000 cycles. A cycle is one takeoff and landing. Records show that the plane had accumulated 92,992 hours and 21,043 cycles at the time of the crash.

“They are not doing the proper maintenance on the planes,” a young UPS worker at Worldport told the WSWs as he was going into work. Of the plane that exploded, the worker said, “that never should have come here, it should have stayed in Texas and gotten the maintenance that it needed. Instead, the company brings it here just so that they can get it back flying—and look what happens.”

Another young worker said, “Companies just care about their profits. They don’t want to put the money into keeping things

working properly; they have us working with the minimum number of workers.”

FAA records show that UPS has opposed safety regulations on the very plane that crashed. Last year, UPS objected to an order by the FAA, known as an “Airworthiness Directive,” that required airlines to inspect the wiring harness inside the pylons of the Boeing MD-11 and MD-11F planes. UPS claimed it would take too long—700 hours instead of the 134 hours that Boeing estimated it would take to test and check the wiring. UPS also objected on the grounds that Boeing did not have replacement parts available for the out-of-date airplanes.

Two weeks after the Louisville crash, UPS Airlines President Bill Moore issued a perfunctory statement expressing his sympathy for the families of the victims and pledging to help them with funeral and other expenses. In callous comments strikingly similar to what US Postal Service officials said after the death of 36-year-old Nicholas Acker, Moore assured investors that UPS had leased enough airplanes and was putting “a lot more packages on the ground” to make up “the capacity difference” after being forced to ground its fleet of MD-11s. “We feel good about what we’ve been able to secure to get us through the end of the year” and the “busy peak season,” he said.

UPS, which reported a net income of \$5.7 billion in 2024 and \$6.7 billion in 2023, reopened its Worldport operations a day after the catastrophe. The 5.2 million-square-foot facility processes more than 2 million packages a day. According to local press reports, UPS has about 26,000 workers in the Louisville area with about 20,000 at the Worldport hub, of which about half work part-time.

“It can take 20 years before they’ll give you a full-time job unless you get promoted into it,” one young worker, who has been working part-time for more than two years, told the WWS. Referring to the high cost of living and the struggle workers face not getting enough hours, he went on: “I have to have a roommate in order to live. We share expenses.”

Another worker pointed out that industrial deaths were happening in every company. He explained that a young electrician was recently killed at another company. “He was just 27, he had three kids, his youngest daughter was just two and he was electrocuted. It wasn’t UPS but another company. He lives here but was working in Indiana. They’re all like this, they’re just about the bottom line.”

UPS has a long record of putting profits over safety. In the last two years alone there have been several fatalities, including:

- In September 2025, 43-year-old UPS driver Shelma Reyna Guerrero was crushed to death while loading packages inside a cargo trailer in Richmond, California. Workers reported that the extendable conveyor “has been malfunctioning for some time” and that they were told to continue working even as Guerrero’s body lay in the trailer.
- On August 6, 2024, 37-year-old delivery driver Luis

Grimaldo collapsed and died in Bell County, Texas, of what coworkers said was a heat-related illness, while delivering packages in temperatures above 100 °F.

- In May 2024, Juan Chavez, a subcontractor, fell into a garbage compactor at a Dallas facility and was killed.

- In February 2024, 46-year-old Dallas Carroll was struck and killed by a vehicle at UPS’s Worldport hub in Louisville, Kentucky.

- On April 23, 2024, UPS driver Julie Reed was killed in a vehicle crash and fire in Indiana.

Instead of protecting workers’ lives, the Teamsters bureaucracy functions as a tool of UPS. The Teamsters have repeatedly negotiated and enforced arrangements that preserve company profits at the expense of rank-and-file interests, including the vast expansion of precarious, low-paid and part-time work.

Teamsters President Sean O’Brien blocked a strike by 340,000 UPS workers in 2023 and hailed as “historic” the five-year deal that has paved the way for thousands of layoffs and even deadlier conditions.

The only way workers can break the stranglehold of the labor bureaucracy is through forming independent, democratic rank-and-file organizations that place control in the hands of workers themselves. Rank-and-file committees can unify full-time and part-time workers to fight for equal wages, guaranteed hours, enforceable safety stop-work rights and transparent bargaining under workers’ control rather than bureaucratic deals made behind closed doors.

These committees can be linked with US Postal Service workers and logistics workers throughout the world through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). The fight for safe jobs and decent wages is inseparable from a struggle against the capitalist system, which prioritizes profit over human lives, and its replacement with socialism and the democratic control over economic life by workers themselves.

For more information about joining the fight for rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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