

UPS shuts down midnight shift at Manhattan's 43rd Street Hub, imposes split shifts in latest wave of job cuts

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UPS carried out the long-threatened closure of the midnight shift at its 43rd Street hub in Manhattan. The closure, repeatedly delayed after a WARN Act notice was first issued in 2025, is the latest chapter in the company's "Network of the Future" restructuring drive which has cost tens of thousands of jobs. In April, UPS announced it would close 27 more facilities nationwide.

The 43rd Street hub had already shuttered its midnight shift once, in early 2024. When UPS issued a second WARN letter, it listed an initial closure date of June 21, 2024, affecting 103 workers. That date was pushed back to March 30, 2025, then rescheduled again before the closure was finally executed on April 17, 2026.

Workers were offered a grim choice: accept the elimination of their jobs outright or take a split-shift arrangement (two separate working periods in a day, separated by up to five or more hours) that has severely impacted workers' lives across UPS facilities in New York City.

One senior full-time worker, who said he feared he would otherwise be forced to seek work at McDonald's, accepted the split shift. He told the WSWS: "We started the split shift... We're beyond exhausted... barely sleep... in some countries, this would be considered torture. No matter the hours, it's still five long hours to wait for your next shift. Your quality of life is gone."

The conditions imposed by UPS's split-shift regime—workers unable to travel home and back within the break interval, deprived of sleep, stripped of any semblance of a normal life—amount to the systematic destruction of workers' physical and mental health in the pursuit of profit.

The shutdown of the 43rd Street midnight shift is one episode in a company-wide jobs massacre. Since 2024, UPS has eliminated at least 48,000 jobs and has announced plans to cut a further 30,000 in 2026, potentially bringing total cuts to 90,000. Twenty-two additional facilities are slated for closure this year. At UPS's flagship automated hub in Louisville, robots now outnumber workers fifteen to one.

CEO Carol Tomé has called this "the most significant strategic shift in our company's history." In practice, that shift means UPS's profitability no longer depends on expanding package volume or preserving jobs. It depends on extracting greater profit from a shrinking workforce through layoffs, automation and the intensification of labor exploitation. The back half of 2026—which Tomé refers to as "the inflection point"—is when Wall Street expects the full benefits of facility closures, job cuts and network consolidation to be realized in higher profit margins.

UPS is not an exception. In January 2026 alone, US firms announced more than 108,000 layoffs—the highest figure for the start of any year since the Great Recession. In 2025, US companies announced more than 1.2 million layoffs. Across logistics, healthcare, auto and technology, corporations are using automation and artificial intelligence to slash labor costs and funnel the savings to shareholders.

The conditions for this bloodbath were established by the 2023 national UPS contract, which the Teamsters promoted as "historic." It contained no meaningful protections against automation-driven job cuts. When UPS launched its Driver Choice Program—a buyout scheme offering drivers up to \$150,000 to leave the company—it initially bypassed the union entirely,

offering it directly to workers. O'Brien objected, not to the elimination of jobs, but to being cut out of the process. The Teamsters bureaucracy derives its institutional power from being the recognized intermediary between workers and management—the mechanism through which workforce compliance is delivered to the company. When UPS went around it, that arrangement was threatened.

UPS's response to O'Brien's objection confirmed what was already well underway: "Over the course of 2026, we expect to be overstaffed in all classifications. This could impact substantially all centers. We anticipate managing this overstaffing through attrition and layoffs." Once UPS agreed to route the program through the bureaucracy, O'Brien declared it a "win." The jobs were still gone.

Article 38 of the National Master Agreement is the only formal recourse available to workers facing shift eliminations and facility closures. Under its provisions, worker concerns are routed through joint union-management committees and ultimately to binding arbitration. At every stage, the process is controlled by the same bureaucratic apparatus that declared the elimination of thousands of jobs a "win."

A search of the Teamsters union website finds no mention of the 43rd Street shift closure, the layoffs or the imposition of split shifts on its own members. The obliteration of the midnight shift at one of New York City's largest UPS hubs simply does not register as something its members need to be told about.

UPS projects it will strip \$3.5 billion in annual labor costs from its operations between 2025 and 2027. Shareholder payouts have remained steady at approximately \$6.56 per share annually, supplemented by \$1 billion in stock buybacks, while CEO Tomé received \$19 million in total compensation in 2024. UPS reported \$5.5 billion in net income last year—while cutting 48,000 jobs. Every worker eliminated from the midnight shift at 43rd Street is a cost removed, a margin improved, a dividend preserved.

Workers in New York should have no illusions about the Democratic Party officials who govern this city and state. Governor Kathy Hochul has presided over a state government that serves the bond markets and the real estate industry. Mayor Zohran Mamdani—a member of the Democratic Socialists of America whose election was propelled by deep opposition to inequality—has

moved to cut school and homeless programs, proposed delaying city workers' pension contributions, and threatened a 9.5 percent property tax increase falling hardest on working class households.

During the recent strike of Long Island Rail Road workers, Hochul denounced workers as overpaid, while Mamdani said nothing except to promote city-organized strikebreaking operations.

The 43rd Street workers are not isolated. There is growing opposition to the contract that the LIRR unions agreed to to end the powerful three-day strike. Transit workers in the TWU are being forced to stay on the job despite an expired contract. In every industry workers face overwork, declining real wages, deteriorating healthcare and unions that co-manage austerity on behalf of the corporations.

The Teamsters apparatus will not defend UPS workers. The 2023 contract, the Article 38 procedure and the DCP settlement all demonstrate that its function is to administer the company's agenda, not to fight it. The answer is the construction of independent rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves and free from the authority of the union apparatus. The central demand must be that not a single job be lost to automation—that the gains of new technology be used to shorten the working day and raise living standards.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees is building the organizational framework to unite workers across industries and across borders against the global jobs massacre and the imperialist war that accompanies it.

Workers at the 43rd Street hub—and at UPS facilities across the country—should contact the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee and join the IWA-RFC at iwa-rfc.org.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact