Amazon delivery driver in Florida found dead in van

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Amazon delivery driver Jaylene Vargas Gonzalez died on Monday, August 10, after she was found unconscious inside her delivery van near Fruitland Park, Florida. The vehicle had apparently remained motionless for hours without anyone from Amazon intervening. The cause of her death remains under investigation, but it is the latest death at one of the most dangerous major employers in the United States.

Deputies were called to the area of Clark Road at about 7:22 p.m. after a resident reported that an Amazon delivery vehicle had remained stationary for several hours. Patrick Miranda, who lives nearby, told local station WKMG that he became concerned after noticing that the vehicle was still running. A phone remained plugged in and a backpack was visible inside, but he could not see the driver.

Miranda said that when a deputy opened the front passenger door, the officer appeared to recoil from fumes coming from inside the vehicle. The deputy then opened the rear sliding doors and found Vargas Gonzalez unconscious in the back.

Firefighters responded wearing gas masks and secured the area because of concerns that a toxic substance might be present. She was transported to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

Authorities have not said what produced the apparent fumes, whether they contributed to Vargas Gonzalez's death or whether another medical or environmental factor was involved. They have also not said how long she had been unconscious inside the van.

Amazon closely monitors the movement and performance of its delivery drivers, yet the van had reportedly remained in the same location for roughly four hours before a resident—not Amazon or the company operating the delivery route—called authorities to request a welfare check.

The company has long been a pioneer in combining high tech with brutal exploitation. A U.S. Senate investigation released in December 2024 found that injury rates at Amazon warehouses were more than 30 percent above the warehousing industry average in 2023, and that Amazon workers had been nearly twice as likely to suffer injuries as workers at other warehouses over the preceding seven years. More than two-thirds of Amazon warehouses examined had injury rates above the industry average.

The death of Vargas Gonzalez comes amid a broader record of deaths and serious injuries among Amazon warehouse and delivery workers.

A mounting death toll

The circumstances differ from case to case, but Amazon workers have repeatedly been killed or suffered fatal injuries on the job in recent years.

• **Rafael Reynaldo Mota Frias, 42,** died on July 13, 2022, at Amazon's Carteret, New Jersey, fulfillment center during the company's Prime Day sales event. Temperatures in the area rose into the 90s. Coworkers said Mota Frias had asked for fans before his death. OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) later listed the cause as cardiac arrest and did not cite Amazon over the death. The company subsequently upgraded cooling at the facility.

• **Roger Boland**, a worker at Amazon's Robbinsville, New Jersey, warehouse, suffered a fatal fall from a ladder on July 24, 2022, and died three days later. Doctors reported that he had an extremely high body temperature when he arrived at the hospital. The outside temperature on the day of the accident reached 95° F (35° C). Amazon prevented OSHA inspectors from entering the room

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where the accident occurred for several weeks.

Eric Vadinsky, a worker at an Amazon delivery facility in Monroe, New Jersey, died on August 4, 2022. Records concerning OSHA's investigation remained unavailable to the public more than two years afterward, despite litigation seeking their release.

Caes David Gruesbeck, 20, died on May 8, 2023, from injuries suffered in an accident involving an overhead conveyor system at Amazon's Fort Wayne, Indiana, fulfillment center.

• **Leony Salcedo-Chevalier, 34,** a father of two, was struck and killed by a box truck backing into a loading dock at Amazon's JFK8 fulfillment center in Staten Island, New York, on April 9, 2025. Salcedo-Chevalier had worked for a third-party contractor rather than Amazon directly.

The high injury rate at Amazon is inseparable from the speed at which workers are required to work. Inside fulfillment centers, workers are tracked against production rates that measure how rapidly they pick, stow and move goods. Amazon's systems record periods of inactivity and give management detailed information on each worker's performance.

Delivery drivers face another version of the same system. Amazon determines routes and delivery schedules through its software and subjects drivers to extensive electronic monitoring. Cameras installed in delivery vans track driving behavior and can flag drivers for alleged infractions, such as distraction, speeding or failing to maintain sufficient following distance.

A Massachusetts Amazon driver previously told the WSWS that he had been penalized after the camera detected his lips moving while he was singing along with a song and classified him as distracted.

The technology gives Amazon the ability to follow the progress of its delivery operation in extraordinary detail. That makes the apparent failure to respond to Vargas Gonzalez's stationary van particularly significant. Amazon has not explained when its systems registered that the vehicle had stopped moving, whether anyone attempted to contact her or what procedures exist when a driver suddenly stops progressing along a route.

Heat is also a serious danger for delivery workers, particularly during summer. Drivers enter and leave their vans scores or even hundreds of times during a shift, making it difficult to maintain a cool interior even when air conditioning is available. Amazon previously required drivers to shut off internal-combustion vans at stops under an "engine off compliance" policy but relaxed that requirement after protests over heat.

Most Amazon delivery drivers do not technically work for Amazon. They are employed through Delivery Service Partners (DSPs), nominally independent companies that contract with Amazon to deliver its packages.

Amazon created the DSP program in 2018 and now relies on thousands of these companies. But Amazon supplies the delivery infrastructure and technology, generates routes and monitors drivers' performance while insisting that responsibility for their employment rests with the contractor.

The arrangement has been used by the company to claim that DSP drivers are not Amazon employees. It also serves as a weapon against attempts to organize opposition to the company. In Palmdale, California, 84 drivers employed by the DSP Battle Tested Strategies organized with the Teamsters in 2023. Amazon later terminated its contract with the company.

The National Labor Relations Board subsequently alleged that Amazon was a joint employer of the drivers and had committed unfair labor practices, including refusing to bargain and retaliating against workers.

The circumstances of Vargas Gonzalez's death remain unresolved. But the fact that an Amazon delivery van could remain motionless for hours before a nearby resident called for help makes clear that workers' safety cannot depend on Amazon management, government agencies or appeals to politicians.

Workers need rank-and-file organizations capable of intervening directly over conditions on the job. Safety committees elected and controlled by workers themselves should have access to information on injuries and hazards and the power to halt work where conditions threaten workers' health or lives, without retaliation. Amazon warehouse workers and delivery drivers confront the same company and the same production system. Their struggle must be linked with workers at UPS, FedEx, USPS and throughout logistics.

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