

# **“Amazon is Knowingly Putting Their Customers at Risk”: A Florida Amazon worker speaks out**

Saturday 18 April 2020, by [WILL](#) (Date first published: 22 April 2020).

I work for Amazon out here in Miami. Working conditions are less than optimal. We are constantly breathing in a bunch of dust all day, in the back of trailers for hours on end with no respiratory protection, just breathing it all up. Since there's no air purification or filtration system, I've been asking for masks for a year.

I asked a senior manager during a meeting: *“Hey you know at home I am coughing some weird dark phlegm and I'm having trouble breathing clearly. And it's not just me. My co-workers, their sinuses are blocked and they have same symptoms as me. Could we just keep masks nearby?”*

The operations manager told me: *“That's your lungs doing what they are supposed to be doing,”* and they won't be providing masks. That was his response.

Fast forward to 2020 with Covid-19 spreading, once again we weren't given masks. When I went to our EHS (Environment, Health, and Safety) department I was told that we needed the *“really expensive”* N-95 masks. They made a point to tell me that these were *“really expensive.”* [and they weren't going to buy them.]

On my way back to my department, I stopped by HR and asked the protocols for experiencing symptoms related to Coronavirus. I was told that we would be advised to leave the premises and seek medical attention. We would only be paid for time off if we tested positive for Covid-19 and couldn't work. Any other pay for time off would have to be deducted from our PTO bank. I wanted clarification that the building would close if someone got infected. I was told it would not be shutting down. In the event an employee tests positive for Coronavirus, they would only be sent home.

Where I live, if you don't show symptoms, you can't be tested for Coronavirus. You have to be over 65 or something, and showing symptoms. However, as is well known, we could be carrying the virus without showing symptoms. So we workers, not wearing masks, can be coughing and spitting when we talk, on the very items being delivered to our customers; shipping them out while they are contaminated.

I was told that the virus can stay on plastic for up to three days, and on cardboard for 24 hours -no longer than some packages take to be delivered.

Me and some other employees tried to voice our concerns. There is a board we have at work where we can express concerns and questions - the *“Voice Of Associates”* board, which the general manager usually answers. Some people wrote: *“Why we won't shut down. The building won't even close for cleaning.”* Mind you the fans haven't been cleaned since the building opened in September 2018.

The GM's response to these grievances was: ***"You have to understand that the customer has orders that have to be fulfilled."***

When I read that, and found out from HR that the building won't close if there is an outbreak among employees, I went to the same board and wrote something along the lines: *"The building has made no substantial changes to keep us safe. They have done the exact opposite of what health officials are telling us to do by they are hiring more people, having people coming to work on our day off, we are not changing our workstation, people are still working on top of each other. Just like how we were working before the outbreak. How many more people must die under your supervision?"* (Employees in the past have died from exhaustion and complications from working so hard!) I told the GM that it was his responsibility to tell corporate. I told him: *"Just as we have to understand the customer has to get their order, the customer has to understand that this is a global pandemic unlike anything we have faced."*

I went back to work later that same day and was looking for his response to my question on the VOA board. Someone erased my comments not even 12 hours after I wrote it. There was no response, nothing. I wrote it anonymously in the tone of someone in fear of their life. And nothing - they just erased it and addressed nothing.

That story is really a PSA for all you Amazon customers to wipe down whatever you are receiving, because no Amazon warehouse is shutting down. Even in Spain and Italy they are still operating. Amazon is knowingly putting their customers at risk. Okay, they don't care about us who work here. But they don't care about you either.

I saw an article that senators have been reaching out to Bezos with letters about working conditions during the outbreak. Saturday morning, during the overnight shift, Amazon announced that they would be giving their employees an additional \$2/hr for hours worked from now through the first week of May and will be paying double that, instead of time-and-a-half, for overtime.

Amazon is also sending managers to separate adults from sitting too close to each other in the breakroom, enforcing this protocol, their idea of precaution.

Meanwhile, after break, it's perfectly normal for those same two grown adults to go back to work chucking boxes in the space of an 8.5' by 9' trailer filled to the top with different boxes of inventory from all over the world, breathing in visible airborne particles for 12 hours. Right next to each other. Business as usual.

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Over the next days and weeks we hope to continue publishing stories about daily life amid the Coronavirus. We are looking for testimonials from everyday people about workplace safety, unemployment and housing issues, struggles with paying bills and taking care of their loved ones as well as any acts of solidarity and collective action in these very difficult times. We want to hear from you!

If you have a story that you want to share with us, please email the editor at [editor@hardcrackers.com](mailto:editor@hardcrackers.com).

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