



As Americans Prepare To Celebrate Labor Day, Let's Not Forget That One Of America's Richest Companies Pays Its Workers \$28,000 Per Year

Conditions In Amazon Warehouses And Fulfillment Centers Remain Abysmal

Date: August 30, 2018

Contact: mediacenter@freeandfairmarketsinitiative.org

Amazon recently launched a warehouse ambassador program to showcase real people who claim that their working conditions are not that bad.

“Amid increasing scrutiny of Amazon’s treatment of its fulfillment center workers—including an April report which alleged that workers are sometimes forced to pee in bottles rather than take bathroom breaks—it seems the company has decided to go on the offense. Over the last two weeks, at least 16 new Twitter accounts have been dispatched to send perky messages to anyone criticizing the company’s practices. The accounts, which are all visually similar, claim to be run by Amazon fulfillment center workers or “ambassadors.”” (Splinter News, “[Check Out These Totally Normal Tweets From Happy Amazon Employees! :](#)),” Sophie Weiner, 8.23.2018)

One Amazon ambassador claimed he can go to the bathroom whenever wants, despite news reports showing that is not always the case.

“Phil, a stower also based in Kent, is perhaps the most active ambassador on Twitter. He says he gets to use a bathroom whenever he wants, and that if Amazon was using Twitter bots to defend itself they’d be more entertaining.” (*The Guardian*, “[Amazon's 'ambassador' workers assure Twitter: we can go to the toilet any time](#),” Dan Tynan, 8.23.2018)

During Amazon Prime Day, warehouse workers complained about “overexertion” and “lack of access to water and time to visit the bathroom.”

“Complaints received from warehouse workers over the 36 hours of Prime Day included stomach cramps caused by overexertion, bad food, lack of access to water and time to visit the bathroom, sprains, back aches and other musculoskeletal injuries and swollen feet from having to run around a warehouse at high speed.” (Wired, “[Amazon Prime Day created a surge in health and safety complaints from exhausted workers](#),” Stephen Armstrong, 7.24.2018)

One worker described the conditions in Amazon warehouses as the “Hunger Games” and said employees are fired for not keeping up with the unrealistic demands.

“Another man, a former carpenter who works in the stow department in Moreno Valley who didn’t want his name used because he still works for Amazon, said that without warning, Amazon changed the amount of time workers had to stow an item from six minutes to four minutes and 12 seconds. “They make it like the Hunger Games,” he said. “That’s what we actually call it.” Workers are competing against an average time, and so they are, in essence,

competing against each other. Those who can't keep up are written up and then fired, he said.” (*The Atlantic*, “[What Amazon Does To Poor Cities](#),” Alana Semuels, 2.1.2018)

In Pennsylvania, workers reported working through grueling heat conditions and said “Amazon arranged to have paramedics parked in ambulances outside” rather than improve the conditions.

“During summer heat waves, Amazon arranged to have paramedics parked in ambulances outside, ready to treat any workers who dehydrated or suffered other forms of heat stress. Those who couldn't quickly cool off and return to work were sent home or taken out in stretchers and wheelchairs and transported to area hospitals. And new applicants were ready to begin work at any time.” (*The Morning Call*, “[Inside Amazon's Warehouse](#),” Spencer Soper, 8.17.2015)

Another worker reported that Amazon played mind games with its employees by setting unrealistic goals.

“I work at the Chester, Virginia warehouse. They paint this picture of it being a fun place. That you get to play games during breaks and have so much fun. The only games they play with you is mind games. That brings me to my 2nd complaint, unrealistic goals. They expect an incredible pace. I was in good shape when I got there, but I was NOT prepared for the miles of walking on concrete every day. My feet hurt so bad, I would have trouble going to sleep, I was in so much pain. My feet have toughened up, but the pay has not.” (Gawker, “[True Stories of Life as an Amazon Worker](#),” Hamilton Nolan, 8.2.2013)

Workers have reported that they are not allowed to sit while on the clock and some have been fired for doing so.

“The worker claimed that Amazon does not allow its employees to sit while on the clock and that workers have been fired for doing so. An Amazon spokeswoman denied this claim and TheStreet could not verify it.

"People are focused on how much their feet, legs, backs hurt them from the strain," the employee said. "Breaks should be much longer, especially since they believe in nobody resting or sitting unless it's break time, even if there is nothing to do or your job is done."” (The Street, “[Amazon Warehouse Employees' Message to Jeff Bezos -- We Are Not Robots](#),” Lindsay Rittenhouse, 9.29.2017)

55 percent of Amazon warehouse workers have reported suffering from depression.

“Rising goals have also taken a toll on employees’ mental health, as 55 percent of them report having suffered depression since working at Amazon. Over 80 percent of workers said they would not apply for a job at Amazon again.” (The Verge, “[Amazon warehouse workers skip bathroom breaks to keep their jobs, says report](#),” Shannon Liao, 4.16.2018)

Amazon workers rely on food stamps to make ends meet and put food on the table.

“The new data showing Amazon employees’ extensive reliance on SNAP demonstrates an additional public cost of the corporation’s rapid expansion. Even as generous subsidies help its warehouses turn a profit, its workers still must turn to the federal safety net to put food on the table.” (The New Food Economy, “[Amazon gets huge subsidies to provide good jobs—but it’s a top employer of SNAP recipients in at least five states](#),” H. Claire Borwn, 4.19.2018)

The median pay of an Amazon worker is \$28,000 per year. In 2017, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos earned 59 times that.

“In 2017, Bezos was compensated \$1,681,840. The average Amazon worker, including those who work in corporate jobs, earned \$28,446. To put it another way, Bezos' compensation was 59 times higher than his average employee. Amazon calculated that figure based on salaries of its

worldwide employees, including season and part-time workers.” (Seattle Patch, “[Jeff Bezos Earned 59 Times The Average Amazon Worker In 2017](#),” Neal McNamara, 4.19.2018)

In Amazon’s most recent quarterly earnings, the company reported over \$2.5 billion in profits.

“The Seattle retail and technology giant on Thursday reported a record profit of \$2.5 billion, the latest sign of the company’s success in tapping new markets even as it deepens its dominant position in e-commerce.” (*The Seattle Times*, “[Amazon posts record \\$2.5 billion profit as cloud sales growth continues](#),” Matt Day, 7.26.2018)

###

ABOUT THE FREE & FAIR MARKETS INITIATIVE

The Free & Fair Markets Initiative (FFMI) is a non-profit coalition of businesses, consumer advocacy groups, workers and community activists committed to scrutinizing and highlighting emerging market trends that are stifling competition and innovation, influencing federal and local government spending, putting consumer data in harm’s way and limiting consumer choice. For a list of members, please visit <https://freeandfairmarketsinitiative.org/about-us/members/>. For more information on the Free & Fair Markets Initiative, please visit <https://freeandfairmarketsinitiative.org>.