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7 Examples of How Amazon Treats Their 90,000+ Warehouse Employees Like Cattle

By Jacob Weindling | December 4, 2017 | 3:30pm

Photo by Peter Macdiarmid/Getty

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Jeff Bezos is the richest man in the world thanks to his ownership of Amazon—an online book store that morphed into a company that replaced Walmart, disrupted grocery stores and builds cloud computing for the CIA. It is typically held up as a paragon of what a business should look like, as it lost money for years while investing in itself. However, this is more of a reflection of how our national conversation is dominated by the investor class, rather than proof of Amazon’s ability to run an admirable business. Silicon Valley titans have more power than most world governments have ever had, but with less oversight—and Amazon is no different.

Jeff Bezos bought *The Washington Post*, and soon branded it with the phrase “democracy dies in darkness.” That mantra isn’t confined to his newspaper, as a reporter for *The Mirror* in the United Kingdom walked in to Amazon’s darkness over the past five months, and shone a light on some fairly horrific business practices. [Per Alan Selby](#):

Timed toilet breaks, impossible targets and exhausting, “intolerable” working conditions are frequent complaints. Staff have been paid less than the living wage, and it even emerged drivers had faced fines for “early” deliveries.

Selby writes that he trains for marathons, and when he went to work undercover at an Amazon shipping facility, he felt incredibly beat up.

My own story of how I became a human robot could not have been darker. Shifts began in the gloom at 7.30am and ended at 6pm, long after the sun had gone down.

The plant, with no natural light, is flooded with fluorescent bulbs – night and day have no meaning.

Many of the clocks have been covered over with tape by employees desperate not to be reminded how long is left of their shift. But time still rules here – a new package must be sealed and ready to go every 30 seconds.

Whatever the hour thousands of workers are racing to hit goals set by computers monitoring their every move. In my five weeks I saw staff struggling to meet impossible targets, in constant fear of the sack.

Two half-hour break
energy up.

ne food to keep my

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Robots have already come for our jobs, but they still need us to service them. For companies like Amazon, the robots that do the heavy lifting effectively need their own robots to keep the system humming, and that is where humanity comes in. This isn't the only story of Amazon brutally pushing their employees to the limit. There is more than enough evidence to rule out this new report as an isolated incident. Here is just a sampling of abuses that come up when you Google "complaints Amazon warehouse."



[In The Seattle Times on April 3rd, 2012](#)

Pam Wethington, a former Campbellsville employee, took several months off work in 2002 because of stress fractures in both feet. She says her doctor attributed the injury to walking miles on the concrete floors of the warehouse, but Amazon disputed that the fractures were work-related.

[In Gawker on August 2nd, 2013](#)

When you're in shipping and they double, or triple their workforce over the winter holidays, you're working at times in below zero temps INSIDE the warehouse. when you have like 40 bay doors open for trucks to pull in it gets very cold. Not only that, but for the people they were going to "Keep" of the temps they hire over the holidays, they throw into new jobs with zero training almost.

[In The Guardian on December 1st, 2013](#)

It's here, where actual people rub up against the business demands of one of the most sophisticated technology companies on the planet, that things get messy. It's a system that includes unsystemisable things like hopes and fears and plans for the future and children and lives. And in places of high unemployment and low economic opportunities, places where Amazon deliberately sites its distribution centres – it received £8.8m in grants from the Welsh government for bringing the warehouse here – despair leaks around the edges.

[In The Morning Call on August 17th, 2015](#)

He got light-headed, he said, and his legs cramped, symptoms he never experienced in previous warehouse jobs. One hot day, Goris said, he saw a co-worker pass out at the water fountain. On other hot days, he saw paramedics bring people out of the warehouse in wheelchairs and on stretchers.

"I never felt like passing out in a warehouse and I never felt treated like a piece of crap in any other warehouse but this one," Goris said. "They can do that because there aren't any jobs in the area."

[In The Huffington](#)

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Less than an hour later, a worker found Jeff on the third floor. He had collapsed and was lying unconscious in aisle A-215, beneath shelves stocked with Tupperware and heating pads.

In [The Huffington Post U.K.](#) on September 29th, 2017

Workers at one of Amazon's "flagship" warehouses are taking home less than the minimum wage after being effectively forced to pay a third-party for the "benefit" of a special bus service.

Some staff at the American giant's site in Rugeley, Staffs, receive £7.65 an hour as warehouse operatives but pocket as little as £6.80 an hour once they've paid to get to the remote rural location.

Other workers for the firm, which made sales worth £7.3bn in the UK last year, have even been seen sleeping under bridges as dire transport links leave them stranded for hours on end.

I wrote [this morning](#) that American democracy takes a back seat to American capitalism, and American capitalism is not confined to our borders. Bezos branding *WaPo* with a trope about democracy while exploiting his Amazon warehouse workers and the towns they reside in is the literal embodiment of what I mean.



Mike Rosenberg
@ByRosenberg

Real things cities are offering to get Amazon HQ2

- *Chicago: Let Amazon keep employees' income tax
- *SoCal: Give away \$100M in land
- *Boston: City employees working just for Amazon
- *Fresno: Let Amazon decide how to spend tax dollars [seattletimes.com/business/amazo...](#)

12:37 AM - Nov 25, 2017

This City Hall, brought to you by Amazon

A review of some of the bids to woo Amazon's HQ2 to other cities and states shows it's not all about the money. In some cases [seattletimes.com](#)

2,616
3,101 people are talking about this

The holidays are coming up and we are all going to buy things, likely from Amazon (confession: I pay for [Amazon Prime](#)). When you click and remark about how easy they made it for you, keep in mind whose expense that comes at. Amazon's hyper-efficiency wouldn't be possible if they treated their workers like human beings.

Jacob Weindling is a staff writer for Paste politics. Follow him on Twitter at [@JakeWeindling](#)

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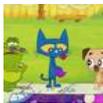
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