

ITEM #81⁽²⁾

(Please reference the attached links for more information)

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

**Regular Meeting
DECEMBER 1, 2020**

SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF

COMMISSIONER MARK BOGEN

To: Eccleston, Wallace
Subject: RE: Additional Information for Agenda Item 81 of the December 1, 2020 Meeting

[Amazon Treats Its Warehouse Workers Like Robots: Ex-Employee | Time](#)

[Amazon engineer Tim Bray resigns over company's treatment of workers \(cnbc.com\)](#)

[Examining Amazon's treatment of its workers - 60 Minutes - CBS News](#)

[Amazon Faces A Crucible Moment With Employees \(forbes.com\)](#)

[California probes Amazon worker treatment during pandemic, court filing shows \(cnbc.com\)](#)

Wally Eccleston
Chief of Staff
Broward County Commissioner Mark D. Bogen
115 S. Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale FL 33301
954-357-7002 Office
954-821-3942 Cell
WECCLESTON@BROWARD.ORG
WWW.BROWARD.ORG

I Worked at an Amazon Fulfillment Center; They Treat Workers Like Robots



Workers protest at an Amazon fulfillment center in Minnesota on March 8.

Awood Center

IDEAS

BY **EMILY GUENDELSBERGER**

JULY 18, 2019 5:36 AM EDT

Guendelsberger is the author of *On the Clock: What Low-Wage Work Did to Me and How It Drives America Insane*

A group of workers with their fists raised in solidarity hold a scrawled sign: “We are humans not robots!” They and others at an Amazon warehouse in Minnesota protested in March and on July’s Amazon Prime Days. They were speaking against the day-to-day dehumanizing reality of their workplace.

If your only interaction with Amazon is packages arriving on your doorstep, it can be hard to understand what workers are unhappy about, or why one described his fulfillment center as an “existential sh-hole,” or why so many others shared stories about crying at work.

I’m among them. I took a job in an Amazon fulfillment center in Indiana over a few weeks—along with a call center in North Carolina and a McDonald’s in San Francisco—to investigate the experience of low-wage work.

I wasn’t prepared for how exhausting working at Amazon would be. It took my body two weeks to adjust to the agony of walking 15 miles a day and doing hundreds of squats. But as the physical stress got more manageable, the mental stress of being held to the productivity standards of a robot became an even bigger problem.

Technology has enabled employers to enforce a work pace with no room for inefficiency, squeezing every ounce of downtime out of workers’ days. The scan gun I used to do my job was also my own personal digital manager. Every single thing I did was monitored and timed. After I completed a task,

the scan gun not only immediately gave me a new one but also started counting down the seconds I had left to do it.

ADVERTISING

It also alerted a manager if I had too many minutes of “Time Off Task.” At my warehouse, you were expected to be off task for only 18 minutes per shift—mine was 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.—which included using the bathroom, getting a drink of water or just walking slower than the algorithm dictated, though we did have a 30-minute unpaid lunch. It created a constant buzz of low-grade panic, and the isolation and monotony of the work left me feeling as if I were losing my mind. Imagine experiencing that month after month.

I felt as if the company wanted us to be robots—never stopping, never letting our minds wander off task. I felt an incredible amount of pressure to repress the human “failings” that made me less efficient than a machine. (Amazon in response said that this is not an “accurate portrayal of working in our buildings” and that it is “proud of our safe workplaces.”)

Unless you’ve worked a low-wage service job over the past decade or so, it’s hard to understand how stressful widespread monitoring technology in the workplace has made life for the bottom half of the labor market. The media have tended to focus on unsafe work conditions and low wages at fulfillment centers. Compared with companies offering other warehousing and unskilled jobs, dozens of current and former workers I spoke to agreed, Amazon was obsessed with safety and generally did have better wages and benefits, even before it raised its minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Amazon Offers to Pay Employees \$10,000 to Quit Their Jobs and Deliver Packages Instead

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Amazon is the apex predator of the modern economy; as with Walmart in the '90s, anyone who wants to compete with it will have to adopt its labor practices. According to Amazon, its U.S. workforce will reach 300,000 employees this year, many of whom work in blue collar jobs. Overall, low-wage jobs have been so routinized and deskilled that “about 47% of total U.S. employment is at risk” of being lost to automation, according to a 2013 Oxford study.

Human workers are still necessary. We remain vastly superior to machines at conversation, creativity, visual recognition and fine motor control, and we're still a little cheaper. But we're not as good at highly inflexible, repetitive tasks as machines and algorithms.

The more human a worker is, the less productive and desirable she is in the cold eyes of the market. And today's technology makes it possible for employers to force workers to suppress their humanity or risk losing their jobs. I'd bet that most of you, even those with white collar jobs, can already identify those same kinds of metrics and monitoring technologies creeping into your daily life.

Those Amazon workers want to be treated like human beings. Sounds reasonable to me.

This appears in the July 29, 2019 issue of TIME.

Amazon engineer quits after he ‘snapped’ when the company fired workers who called for coronavirus protections

PUBLISHED MON, MAY 4 2020 10:18 AM EDT UPDATED MON, MAY 4 2020 2:27 PM EDT

[Annie Palmer@ANNIERPALMER](#)

KEY POINTS

- Tim Bray, a senior engineer at Amazon, resigned on Friday over concerns about the company’s decision to fire workers who were outspoken critics of its labor practices.
- In a blog post, Bray said he “snapped” when he learned Amazon fired Maren Costa and Emily Cunningham, two former user experience designers who criticized Amazon’s climate stance and treatment of warehouse workers.
- Amazon has also fired multiple warehouse employees who criticized working conditions at its facilities.



Nikol Szymul staffs a reception desk at Amazon offices discretely tucked into a building called Fiona in downtown Seattle, Washington on May 11, 2017.

Getty Images

Tim Bray, a senior [Amazon](#) software engineer, has resigned from his role at the company after five years, citing “dismay” over Amazon’s decision to fire outspoken critics of its labor practices.

In a fiery [blog post](#), titled “Bye, Amazon,” Bray, a vice president at Amazon Web Services (AWS), said his last day at the company was Friday. Bray said he “snapped” after Amazon [fired](#) Emily Cunningham and Maren Costa, two former user experience designers who criticized Amazon’s climate stance and, most recently, its treatment of warehouse workers amid the [coronavirus](#). Amazon has said it fired Costa and Cunningham for “repeatedly violating internal policies.”

“I quit in dismay at Amazon firing whistleblowers who were making noise about employees frightened of Covid-19,” Bray wrote in the blog post, adding that “remaining an Amazon VP would have meant, in effect, signing off on actions I despised. So I resigned.”

Bray did not respond to a request for comment. Amazon declined to comment on Bray’s resignation.

Before he resigned, Bray had shown support for an employee advocacy group, Amazon Employees for Climate Justice, which Cunningham and Costa were also a part of. He also signed onto an [April letter](#) to CEO Jeff Bezos and Amazon's board of directors, which received more than 8,700 signatures, calling on the company to develop a comprehensive climate change plan.

Cunningham said she commends Bray for "his integrity" and for "doing the right thing" by resigning from his role at AWS. Bray's resignation could spark similar moves from other corporate Amazon employees who want to see meaningful changes made at the company, Cunningham added.

"I think people in general want to work for companies that they feel proud of," Cunningham said. "Amazon has an incredible opportunity to lead both in the coronavirus crisis and with the climate, but it has to start by listening to workers instead of firing us."

An Amazon spokesperson told CNBC in a statement that it supports workers' rights to protest and criticize their employer's working conditions, "but that does not come with blanket immunity against bad actions, particularly those that endanger the health, well-being or safety of their colleagues."

In addition to Costa and Cunningham, Amazon has [fired multiple warehouse employees](#) who criticized the working conditions at its facilities during the pandemic. The company continues to face widespread criticism over its decision last month to [fire Chris Smalls](#), a warehouse worker who organized a strike at its Staten Island, New York, facility. Smalls said he was fired for organizing the strike, but Amazon said it dismissed Smalls because he violated social distancing rules while he was supposed to be under quarantine after being exposed to a co-worker who tested positive for the coronavirus.

Amazon warehouse workers across the country have [called for the company](#) to put in place greater safety protections, including closing down facilities where there are positive cases for additional cleaning. Warehouse workers have staged protests at facilities in [Detroit](#), Illinois and Staten Island, and they participated in nationwide strikes held last week.

The workers' calls have recently sparked a response from growing numbers of corporate Amazon employees. Earlier this month, Amazon employees participated in a ["sick out"](#) to show support for Costa and Cunningham, as well as warehouse workers. Amazon Employees for Climate Justice estimates that "well over 500 tech workers" participated in the sick out, the group previously told CNBC.

Amazon has previously said it has gone to “great lengths” to keep facilities clean and make sure employees are following necessary precautions, such as washing their hands, using hand sanitizer and practicing social distancing. It has also started taking employees’ temperatures when they report to work and has supplied them with face masks. In the company’s latest earnings report, Amazon said it would invest its expected \$4 billion second-quarter profit in coronavirus-related efforts, such as purchasing additional safety gear for workers and building out its coronavirus testing capabilities, among other things.

Bray said he believes Amazon’s messaging around its efforts to keep workers safe, saying he has “heard detailed descriptions from people I trust of the intense work and huge investments.” However, he said he also believes the repeated outcries from warehouse workers, adding that the criticism of the conditions extends beyond its response to the coronavirus crisis.

“At the end of the day, the big problem isn’t the specifics of the Covid-19 response,” Bray said. “It’s that Amazon treats the humans in the warehouses as fungible units of pick-and-pack potential.”

~~Breakers into~~ Amazon's

While Amazon proves to be a valuable resource for many Americans, particularly in the time of COVID-19, workers at the company are calling for safer conditions and better benefits.

- 2020 **May 10**
- CORRESPONDENT **Lesley Stahl**
- FACEBOOK
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WATCH NOW

Amazon is the second largest private employer in the country, headed by the richest man on Earth. As the coronavirus pandemic has upended American life as we know it, many of us at home have relied on Amazon as a lifeline. Its workers have been called heroes.

- **Amazon worker: At least 600 Amazon employees stricken by coronavirus**
- **More 60 Minutes coronavirus coverage**

But the company has come under fire for the way it treats those workers on the frontlines of delivery. In his latest earnings' report, a week and a half ago, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos committed an additional \$4 billion, at least, for COVID expenses, including more protections for his employees. He said it would require not just money, but invention and humility. Figuring out how to make this happen falls in great part on the shoulders of Amazon's head of operations, Dave Clark.

Lesley Stahl: Amazon is seen as an essential service through this pandemic. But you have been very slow to install your workers' protections. And it's hurt your reputation. You've been seen as a company that puts profits ahead of people.



Dave Clark

Dave Clark: I could not disagree more strongly with the premise that we're late to this party. I think-- quite to the contrary. I think we've been early on the curve to this than most employers, particularly major employers in the U.S.

As head of operations at Amazon, Dave Clark is in charge of over a million people, 1000 buildings, and shipping your packages. All while keeping Amazon's workforce safe, whether its employees filling orders at the warehouse, or drivers showing up at your front door.

But since March, some of those workers have started staging protests, walkouts, and sick-outs in New York, Minnesota, Detroit and Chicago.

The protestors want the company to only ship essential items to limit their potential exposure, they want hazard pay and better sick leave. So now Dave Clark is adding damage control to his portfolio.

We talked with him remotely as he took us on a tour of a warehouse near Seattle, showing us where some of the \$800 million the company says it has spent on worker protections thus far has gone. For example, they have installed thermal cameras in many of their locations, to take employees' temperatures.

Lesley Stahl: They can take someone's temperature that fast?

Dave Clark: It can

They then take a mask.

Next, a visit to an onsite testing lab. Amazon is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to develop a way for employees to self-administer a coronavirus test, using saliva or a nasal swab.

But this is still a work in progress. Right now the swab is sent offsite for analysis, results can take as long as five days.



A cleaner sprays disinfectant inside an Amazon warehouse

This is the main work floor where items are sorted and boxed. We saw people in hazmat suits spraying surfaces with a misting disinfectant.

Lesley Stahl: And this goes on all day?

Dave Clark: Some sites this happens once a week, and some sites this occurs throughout the day every day.

Lesley Stahl: Is once a week enough?

Dave Clark: Again, it depends on the area.

Amazon says it is now trying to enforce social distancing by videotaping all its employees and using artificial intelligence to study their movements. Clark says the company's extensive camera system is also being used for contact tracing in order to identify workers who came in contact with a sick colleague

and send them into quarantine. In addition, these portable washing stations have been rolled in.

Dave Clark: We've deployed these all across all of our sites. They have disinfecting soap, water, paper towels.



In the future: A robot is being built to emit UV light to kill viruses on surfaces.

Amazon also shared video of something they are working on for the future: a robot that emits a certain type of UV light to kill the virus on surfaces. It could be used one day in warehouses, and at Whole Foods, which is owned by Amazon.

Lesley Stahl: So here's a question of great interest to an awful lot of us. Are you worried that you might be transmitting coronavirus through your boxes, through cardboard or plastic?

Dave Clark: No. we do not see risk there for customers or employees.

Lesley Stahl: You have installed, by what you're saying, over 150 safety measures. And yet, COVID cases keep popping up. Now, why do you think that is?

Dave Clark: We see COVID cases popping up at roughly a rate generally just under what the actual community infection rates are, because our employees live and are part of those communities.

Lesley Stahl: So you're saying that if these new cases keep popping up that it's not bc they're getting it or spreading it in your facilities?

Dave Clark: That's correct.

But employees have complained they're in jeopardy at the warehouses, because social distancing isn't always enforced. Throughout March and April, workers shared through texts and social media images of crowding, the work-floor, and break-room.

Lesley Stahl: So how many positive cases have you discovered at Amazon?

Dave Clark: The actual-- sort of total number of cases isn't particularly useful because it's relative to the size of the building and then the overall community infection rate.

Lesley Stahl: So you-- you don't know or you're just not gonna tell us how many cases have been discovered?

Dave Clark: I-- I don't ha-- I mean, we know. I don't have the number right on me at this moment because it's not a particularly useful number.

But warehouse workers we spoke to would like to know. They say they aren't given enough information to assess their own risk.

Amazon says it notifies all workers through texts and robo-calls every time a specific warehouse has a confirmed case, but workers told us they don't feel these robocalls are useful, because they don't tell all employees in which department or shift the sick person worked. And some of these buildings can fit 40 football fields in them.

ROBOCALL: We want to let you know we have 11 additional confirmed cases of Covid 19 at AVP1 in the Hazelton region.

Hazleton, Pennsylvania, is where we found the largest cluster of COVID-19 in the Amazon network. Workers there tell us they've counted well over 70 cases in their warehouse, but they're petrified to complain for fear of losing their jobs.

The whole community of Hazleton, a small town with a large working class hispanic population, has seen a spike of infections, partly due to the local Cargill meatpacking plant that had to close down for two weeks for sanitizing.

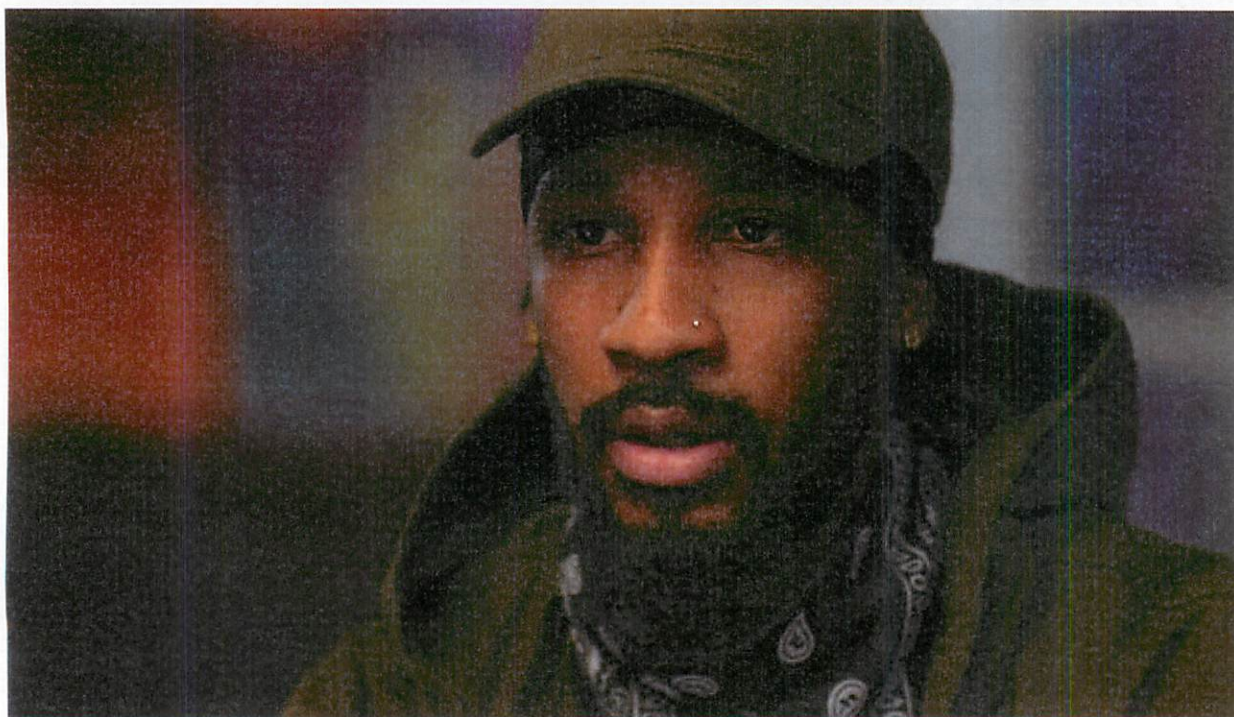
Lesley Stahl: Hazleton, Pennsylvania, your warehouse there seems to be a hotspot, a major hotspot. Why not shut down that facility and sanitize? Sanitize that building.

Dave Clark: We sanitized that building 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have misting crews in there every day. We have janitorial cleaning every day.

Lesley Stahl: Why the reluctance to shut down a plant where there are-- many cases? I mean, this isn't just Hazleton.

Dave Clark: It's not a reluctance-- it's just not effective. If I-- if I believed that shutting down the plant was the answer to keeping our people safe, we would do it. But it's not.

The CDC recommends that when a plant has a case it should close down that worker's area and try to wait for 24 hours before disinfecting. Calls for closing Amazon facilities for deep cleaning are being heard all around the country.



Chris Smalls

Lesley Stahl: So you organized a protest on March 30th. What specifically were you asking for at that point?

Chris Smalls: Simple demands. All we wanted was the building to be closed down and sanitized.

Chris Smalls, an assistant manager in Staten Island, New York, was the first to organize a walkout in the United States. He says workers were getting sick,

and management was not doing enough.

Lesley Stahl: Tell us what happened to you after the protest.

Chris Smalls: I was terminated two hours later--

Lesley Stahl: You were fired.

Chris Smalls: Yes.

Lesley Stahl: Yeah.

Chris Smalls: I was fired.

Lesley Stahl: Are you the only Amazon employee who spoke up, protested, who's been fired?

Chris Smalls: No, I'm not. There's been a few, quite a few.

Lesley Stahl: We have encountered some fear among people at Amazon because they have seen that protest leaders have been fired just for complaining.

Dave Clark: Well, I can tell you we have a zero tolerance policy for retaliating against people or for any number of issues. I've been here 21 years and I've never seen anybody fired for complaining or raising a concern.



Protesters outside an Amazon facility

Dave Clark says Chris Smalls was fired because he violated the company's quarantine policy. But an internal memo leaked to Vice News describes Amazon's head lawyer David Zapolsky planning to discredit the protest movement by smearing Smalls.

Lesley Stahl: It's written right down in this document that you were gonna go after him.

Dave Clark: Well, I think-- it's unfortunate-- I think it's unfortunate because-- you know, I think his frustration got the better of him in that comment.

Lesley Stahl: Well, the state of New York is looking into why he was fired. And there have been other protesters as well who've been fired. He's not the only one. There is a little list here.

Dave Clark: Yeah, and, again I think if you go through each one of those individuals what you're going to find is some sort of substantive policy violation-- or safety violation that occurred in the process.

But a top Amazon engineer quit last week, writing in a blog that the protestors are whistleblowers, and firing them is, "evidence of a vein of toxicity running through the company culture."

And on Wednesday, nine senators called on Amazon to clarify these terminations.

Lesley Stahl: Well, I think there's been some commentary that you are beginning to build a labor movement. And that that's at the heart of this. This is your main goal. Is that fair?

Chris Smalls: It wasn't my main goal, but now it is--

Lesley Stahl: Now it is?

Chris Smalls: Yeah, it is.

Lesley Stahl: A union agitator, ya know?

Chris Smalls: Hey I understand but It's necessary. If they're not gonna take care of their employees somebody has to.

Chris Smalls and others are calling on Amazon to extend benefits during the pandemic, like more generous sick leave, and extra pay.

Lesley Stahl: Many of your workers are putting their health in jeopardy. and a lotta people see them as heroes. Don't they deserve hazard pay? This is hazardous--

Dave Clark: Well, I see them as heroes too. And we have put in place. Th-- we're paying \$2 extra an hour, paying double time for overtime.

Lesley Stahl: The \$2 raise and more for overtime is set to expire on May 16th. Are you gonna let it expire or are you gonna extend it?

Dave Clark: There's no decision to be made at this point whether to end May 16th or continue.

He says that everyday there're big decisions like this he has to make, as head of operations, to keep the packages coming and address the criticism.

Dave Clark: If anybody walked into this with a perfect playbook for how to execute-- continuing to-- to send essential goods to people in the middle of a pandemic, I'd love to see it. You know, do I wish we were perfect from day one? Of course. Do I feel like we put people in unnecessary risk? No.

Produced by Shachar Bar-On and Natalie Jimenez Peel. Field producer, Kate Morris. Broadcast associate, Maria Rutan.

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Amazon Faces A Crucible Moment With Employees



Denise Lee Yohn Contributor
CMO Network
I write about brand leadership.

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-
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Given the harsh and widespread criticism over their treatment of Amazon employees during the ... [+]

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Amazon is at a crossroads. Amazon and CEO Jeff Bezos are facing sharp criticism over their treatment of Amazon employees – and the way the company responds to the objections may well determine its future. The ordeal over Amazon’s employee engagement can serve either as the stumbling block

that causes the company to stagnate and perhaps even decline, or as a shot in the arm that refocuses and reenergizes the organization.

Amazon Has Come Under Fire

Reports of unsafe working conditions at Amazon warehouses have attracted widespread attention and many questions have been raised about whether or not Amazon fired whistleblowers who raised concerns about the lack of protection for employees at the company:

- The news television show [60 Minutes](#) recently did a deep dive into the matter.
- A [single video from CNN](#) on the topic has been viewed over 300,000 times on YouTube and received nearly 1,600 comments.
- A group of nine U.S. senators including five former presidential candidates issued an [open letter](#) to CEO Jeff Bezos, seeking more information about the recent employee firings.
- A [blog post](#) by Tim Bray, former vice president and Distinguished Engineer at Amazon Web Services, explaining that he quit “in dismay” over the firings has received extensive coverage in the news and social media.

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In response to the hailstorm of criticism, Amazon has enumerated the actions it has taken to ensure workplace safety and support its employees, including implementing over 150 significant process changes, setting up testing stations in and regularly sanitizing its locations, and increasing employee pay.

The company has also announced that going forward it will reinvest at least \$4 billion into Covid-19 related expenses including employee safety. It is unclear, though, how much of that spend will be directed toward employee good vs. customer and business growth efforts, such as developing consumer home testing kits for the virus, optimizing a supply chain for pandemic supplies and treatments, and investing in research for coronavirus vaccines and therapies.

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It is also unclear whether the importance the company now seems to be placing on its employees is in response to the negative coverage and scrutiny, or if it truly reflects the company's sentiments. Skeptics seem justified in questioning if Amazon truly values its frontline employees and is invested in

their wellbeing. After all, before the pandemic Amazon had been accused of poor working conditions and employee morale at the company's warehouses.

Employee Engagement Matters to All Stakeholders

The criticism aimed at Amazon matters because employee engagement impacts customers' perceptions and purchase decisions. [Research by public relations firm Weber Shandwick](#) has shown that when consumers discuss companies, how they treat employees is among their top five concerns. And in [a report issued by Edelman Intelligence](#), a global research firm, no single action by a company is more interconnected with its ability to build trust with the public than "treating employees well."

The Covid-19 pandemic has heightened the priority customers put on employee welfare. [Researchers at Morning Consult surveyed 2,200 American adults in March 2020](#) and found 67% said it was very important that companies "take care of their employees and treat them well, even in tough times." 53% agreed with the statement "I am more likely to purchase from companies that treat their employees with flexibility and empathy."

How Amazon treats its employees also matters because it impacts the company's ability to retain existing employees and attract new ones. Bray's departure from the company was a widely-publicized example of the damaging effect that worker mistreatment can have on other employees, but it's unlikely to be the only consequence. A significant percentage of warehouse employees currently choosing to stay home without pay may decide not to return at all.

Although Amazon has been hiring at record levels during the global pandemic, adding 175,000 employees in the last two months, this pace won't continue

and the company will eventually return to the same war for talent that many employers had been fighting before Covid-19. Future potential employees will no doubt be influenced by the broad news coverage during the crisis. Beyond that, employer review sites such as Glassdoor and Indeed and social media such as LinkedIn have created influential platforms for employees to shape perceptions of companies among prospective employees.

Amazon's employee engagement also matters to investors. In last week's shareholder meeting, participants pressed Bezos and other Amazon representatives about the company's treatment of employees. They also asked about the risk to the company's reputation that the increased scrutiny into its workforce management might cause. On the eve of the meeting, [CtW Investment Group](#), an organization that works with union-sponsored pension funds that own nearly 900,000 Amazon shares, convened hundreds of shareholders so they could hear directly from warehouse workers.

Bezos's Vision Depends on Employees

Above all, employee engagement matters to Bezos himself, whether he realizes it or not. Since its inception, he has run the organization less as a company that sells goods and services and more as a force for transformation based on ideas and values.

Bezos demands the company remain "relentless" in its "customer obsession." He uses his annual [letters to shareholders](#) to evangelize his management philosophies and practices. The organization uses core values entitled "[Leadership Principles](#)" to propagate his unique approach to running a business. Clearly, effective employee engagement is critical to operationalizing the culture Bezos desires.

Moreover, after five months of research into Bezos and the company, writer Franklin Foer concluded [in The Atlantic](#) that Bezos envisions Amazon ushering in a better future for the world – a future where entrepreneurs create solutions to the world’s biggest problems and corporations are the force for positive change and social good. To fulfill this vision, Bezos needs employees to be fulfilled and focused, productive and purposeful.

Amazon’s Golden Opportunity

Despite all the trouble they’ve caused the company, the crisis and criticism present Amazon with an opportunity – to become the standard bearer in employee engagement.

The charges against Amazon seem to have set the company back on its heels and it’s been operating from a defensive position for several weeks now. It needs to get out in front of the concerns with substantive changes, instead of issuing news releases like the one it produced in advance of last week’s shareholder meeting that looked like a news story and promoted how Amazon is protecting employees. Instead of creating canned videos of workers praising the company and touting its safety measures, it should pursue groundbreaking solutions that actually improve its workplaces and culture,

Now is the time for Amazon to demonstrate true leadership in the way it engages its workforce. Some possible approaches include:

- **Proactively involve frontline employees** in problem-solving and decision-making on workplace safety and employee engagement.
- **Regularly survey employees** and solicit feedback from them to understand their needs and concerns – and **communicate**

with transparency to employees and other stakeholders about the findings and plans for addressing them.

- **Institute new measures of performance** and definitions of success for employees, and ensure alignment of expectations on employees throughout the organization.
- **Develop an integrated employee experience** that addresses their full range of needs – emotional, financial, social, and physiological, in addition to safety.
- **Share employee engagement best practices** with other companies, reporting on progress as well as setbacks, as it has previously done with new product failures such as the Fire Phone.

All the resourcefulness and passion – as well as superior operational capabilities and vast resources – that has enabled Amazon to produce so many ground-breaking innovations for customers should now be directed toward employees. Bezos and his leadership team must see Amazon’s workforce not as an expensive drag on the company’s profitability, but as an energizing flywheel that propels its productivity.

In other words, if Amazon wants to remain “customer-obsessed,” it must also become employee-obsessed.

California probes Amazon worker treatment during pandemic, court filing shows

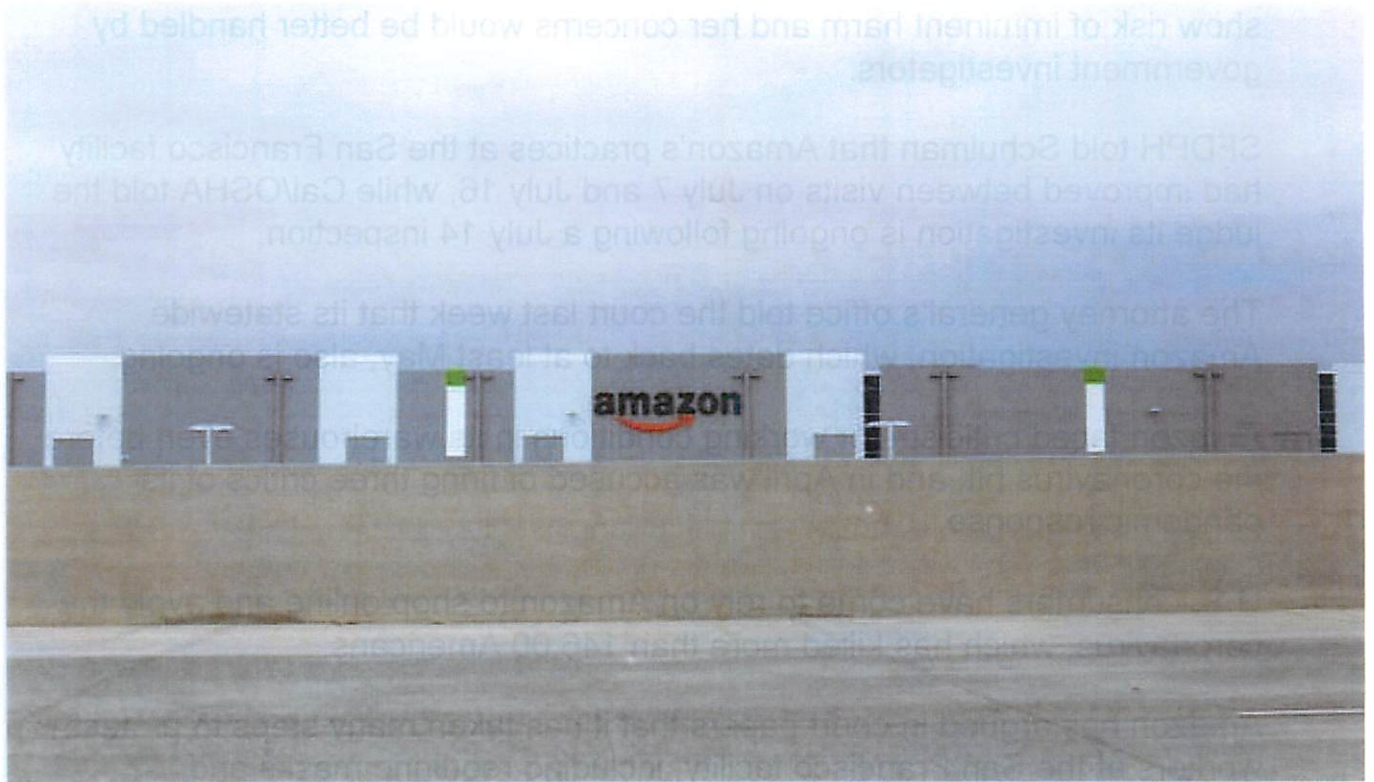
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REUTERS

KEY POINTS

- Attorney General Xavier Becerra's office, California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health and the San Francisco Department of Public Health "have all opened investigations into Amazon's practices" around the pandemic, the filing shows.
- Chiyomi Brent, described as a picker who fills orders at Amazon's San Francisco Fulfillment Center, filed a lawsuit on June 11 contending the world's largest online retailer has put workers at "needless risk."
- The lawsuit alleges unsafe practices such as having workers share equipment such as freezer suits and failing to allow extra time for safe social distancing.



An Amazon distribution center is shown next to the freeway in Fontana, California, U.S., June 30, 2020.

Mike Blake | Reuters

California's attorney general and state and local agencies are investigating whether [Amazon](#) has taken adequate steps to protect its workers from the coronavirus pandemic, according to a court filing on Monday.

Attorney General Xavier Becerra's office, California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health and the San Francisco Department of Public Health "have all opened investigations into Amazon's practices" around the pandemic, San Francisco Superior Court Judge Ethan Schulman wrote in the filing.

Chiyomi Brent, described as a picker who fills orders at Amazon's San Francisco Fulfillment Center, filed a lawsuit on June 11 contending the world's largest online retailer has put workers at "needless risk." The lawsuit alleges unsafe practices such as having workers share equipment such as freezer suits and failing to allow extra time for safe social distancing.

The attorney general's office declined to comment, and Amazon and the other agencies did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Schulman refused to issue a preliminary injunction that would have closed the warehouse until more precautions were taken. He said Brent had failed to

show risk of imminent harm and her concerns would be better handled by government investigators.

SFDPH told Schulman that Amazon's practices at the San Francisco facility had improved between visits on July 7 and July 16, while Cal/OSHA told the judge its investigation is ongoing following a July 14 inspection.

The attorney general's office told the court last week that its statewide Amazon investigation, which dates back to at least May, also is ongoing.

Amazon faced criticism for working conditions in its warehouses even before the coronavirus hit, and in April was accused of firing three critics of its pandemic response.

U.S. consumers have come to rely on Amazon to shop online and avoid the coronavirus, which has killed more than 146,00 Americans.

Amazon has argued in court papers that it has taken many steps to protect workers at the San Francisco facility, including requiring masks and extensively disinfecting equipment such as freezer suits. Amazon and SFDPH told the court that no coronavirus cases had been linked to the facility.

New York Attorney General Letitia James's office sent a letter to Amazon in April saying the online retailer may have violated safety measures and labor practices during the pandemic. The letter came after Amazon terminated Christian Smalls, a critic of the company's warehouse conditions in the pandemic, for violating a paid quarantine.