

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
<https://oversight.house.gov>

March 31, 2022

Mr. Andy Jassy
President and Chief Executive Officer
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Jassy:

The Oversight Committee is seeking documents regarding Amazon's labor practices, particularly during severe weather events. We are concerned by recent reports that Amazon may be putting the health and safety of its workers at risk, including by requiring them to work in dangerous conditions during tornadoes, hurricanes, and other extreme weather. During the tornado strikes in Edwardsville, Illinois, six workers died after supervisors at the Amazon facility reportedly threatened employees and contractors with termination if they left work and sought safety during the dangerous storm. As one of our country's largest and most profitable corporations, it is imperative that Amazon protect workers' safety and refrain from practices that could put them in danger.

On December 10 and 11, 2021, a series of devastating tornadoes struck southern Illinois and several neighboring states.¹ The storms killed more than 80 people, devastated entire towns, and left thousands without power. Six people died while working at the Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville, Illinois.²

In the days following the storms, allegations surfaced that Amazon employees and contractors were threatened by their supervisors with termination or other adverse employment consequences if they left work to seek adequate shelter and safety as the tornadoes approached.³ Before he died in the Amazon warehouse collapse, Amazon employee Larry Virden texted his

¹ *Tornadoes Leave Trail of Devastation Across Six States, with Scores Dead*, New York Times (Dec. 11, 2021) (online at www.nytimes.com/live/2021/12/11/us/tornadoes-midwest-south).

² *At Least Six People Died After an Amazon Warehouse in Illinois Took a Direct Hit*, New York Times (Dec. 11, 2021) (online at www.nytimes.com/2021/12/11/us/amazon-warehouse-deaths-tornado.html).

³ *"Keep Driving": Amazon Dispatcher Texts Show Chaos Amid Twisters*, Bloomberg (Dec. 16, 2021) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-12-17/amazon-tornado-aftermath-workers-say-they-lacked-emergency-training).

girlfriend, “Amazon won’t let us leave.”⁴ According to dispatcher messages, a contract delivery driver located outside the Edwardsville facility, who expressed concern about the growing storms, was told by her supervisor to “just keep delivering, we can’t just call people back for a warning unless amazon [sic] tells us to do so.”⁵ When the driver reported continued tornado alarms and asked permission to seek safety, she was told such a choice “will ultimately end with you not having a job come tomorrow morning.”⁶ The family of Austin McEwen, an Amazon delivery truck driver who died in the tornado, has filed a wrongful death suit against Amazon alleging that he was forced to remain at work despite the danger and that the warehouse lacked both adequate shelter spaces and an adequate emergency plan.⁷

Edwardsville was not an isolated incident. Amazon workers were reportedly required to stay on the job during deadly wildfires in California in 2018, extreme heat in the Pacific Northwest in Summer 2021, and dangerous flooding during Hurricanes Irma in 2017 and Ida in 2021.⁸ In addition, Amazon’s alleged lack of adequate health and safety measures for employees throughout the coronavirus pandemic have been the target of a lawsuit from New York Attorney General Letitia James.⁹

As our society continues to grapple with the global climate crisis, severe weather events will only grow in frequency and intensity. In 2021, 40% of Americans lived in counties hit by extreme weather events.¹⁰ It is critical that employers like Amazon take the dangers of extreme weather seriously and prioritize worker safety over the corporate bottom line.

The Committee seeks to fully understand the events that led to the tragedy at Amazon’s Edwardsville facility. We also seek information about Amazon’s workplace policies or practices that may have prevented the workers from seeking safe shelter, as well as Amazon’s actions in

⁴ *After Deadly Warehouse Collapse, Amazon Workers Say They Receive Virtually No Emergency Training*, The Intercept (Dec. 13, 2021) (online at <https://theintercept.com/2021/12/13/amazon-illinois-tornado-safety-protocols/>).

⁵ *“Keep Driving”*: *Amazon Dispatcher Texts Show Chaos Amid Twisters*, Bloomberg (Dec. 16, 2021) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-12-17/amazon-tornado-aftermath-workers-say-they-lacked-emergency-training).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Wrongful Death Lawsuit Filed Over Edwardsville Worker Killed in Amazon Collapse*, WGN9 (Jan. 16, 2022) (online at <https://wgntv.com/news/family-of-edwardsville-worker-killed-in-amazon-warehouse-collapse-files-lawsuit/>).

⁸ *Amazon’s Casualties in Illinois Aren’t an Isolated Incident*, EnGadget (Dec. 13, 2021) (online at www.engadget.com/amazon-tornado-edwardsville-illinois-deaths-climate-220437155.html).

⁹ *See* New York Attorney General’s Office, *Press Release: Attorney General James Files Lawsuit Against Amazon for Failing to Protect Workers During COVID-19 Pandemic* (Feb. 17, 2021) (online at <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2021/attorney-general-james-files-lawsuit-against-amazon-failing-protect-workers>); New York Attorney General’s Office, *Press Release: Attorney General James Seeks Emergency Relief to Protect Rights and Safety of Amazon Workers* (Nov. 30, 2021) (online at <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2021/attorney-general-james-seeks-emergency-relief-protect-rights-and-safety-amazon>).

¹⁰ *More Than 40 Percent of Americans Live in Counties Hit by Climate Disasters in 2021*, Washington Post (Jan. 5, 2022) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/01/05/climate-disasters-2021-fires/).

responding to other severe weather incidents and natural disasters.¹¹ This investigation will inform legislative efforts to curb unfair labor practices, strengthen protections for workers, and address the effects of climate change on worker safety.

To assist us in our review of this matter, please produce the following documents by April 14, 2022:

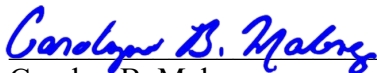
1. All policies, procedures, and other documents on disaster or emergency preparedness and required drills, including, but not limited to:
 - a. all emergency preparedness requirements for employees, contractors, and vendors, including those in effect on December 10, 2021;
 - b. documents sufficient to show the date and substance of each emergency drill carried out at the Amazon facility in Edwardsville, Illinois, since January 1, 2020; and
 - c. all documents and communications regarding severe weather protocol and policies sent to managerial staff, employees, and contractors at the Amazon facility in Edwardsville, Illinois, since January 1, 2020.
2. All communications on December 10 and 11, 2021, regarding the severe weather events and their aftermath at the Amazon facility in Edwardsville, Illinois, including but not limited to:
 - a. all communications between managerial staff, employees, or contractors regarding employment responsibilities and company protocol during the severe weather events;
 - b. all communications between managerial staff, employees, or contractors regarding requests for time off, extended breaks, or opportunities to seek shelter during severe weather events; and
 - c. all communications involving corporate leadership, regional management, or managerial staff at the Edwardsville facility.
3. All attendance and leave policies implemented at the Amazon facility in Edwardsville, Illinois, for employees, contractors, and vendors, as well as disciplinary and termination policies and procedures for employees, contractors, and vendors, including those in effect on December 10, 2021.

¹¹ See Letter from Representative Cori Bush, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Senator Elizabeth Warren to Andy Jassy, Chief Executive Officer, Amazon.com, Inc., and Jeff Bezos, Former Chief Executive Officer, Amazon.com, Inc. (Dec. 21, 2021) (online at <https://bush.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/bush.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/Letter%20to%20Amazon%2012.20.21%20FINAL%20V.pdf>).

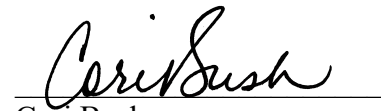
4. All documents regarding employee rights in the workplace issued to managerial staff, employees, and contractors at the Amazon facility in Edwardsville, Illinois, since January 1, 2020.
5. Documents sufficient to show all injuries or deaths suffered by Amazon employees, contractors, and vendors related to severe weather or natural disasters since January 1, 2017.
6. All documents related to any internal reviews, assessments, or investigations into the events of December 10 and 11, 2021, at the Amazon facility in Edwardsville, Illinois.
7. All documents detailing any terminations or disciplinary actions taken, and the reason such actions were taken, against employees or contractors at the Amazon facilities in the following location for activities occurring on the listed dates:
 - a. Edwardsville, Illinois, December 10 and 11, 2021;
 - b. Florida, August 30 to September 14, 2017;
 - c. New York, August 26 to September 4, 2021;
 - d. Sacramento, California, November 8 to 10, 2018;
 - e. Bessemer, Alabama, May 2021;
 - f. Kent, Washington, June 20 to 30, 2021; and
 - g. Staten Island, New York, June 15 to July 8, 2021.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to this request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,


Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman


Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress


Cori Bush
Member of Congress

Enclosure

Mr. Andy Jassy
Page 5

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Ranking Member