

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 11, 2022

Andy Jassy
President and Chief Executive Officer
Amazon
410 Terry Ave North
Seattle, WA 98109

Jeffrey P. Bezos
Executive Chair
Amazon
410 Terry Ave North
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Jassy and Mr. Bezos:

On December 10, 2021, we wrote to you after a tornado caused the deaths of six workers in your Edwardsville, Illinois warehouse “to express our grave concern regarding Amazon’s anti-worker policies that prioritize profits over worker safety, and appear[ed] to have contributed to the tragic deaths.”¹ That letter contained a series of questions about our concerns.

You responded to that letter on January 3, 2022. This was a disappointing response, which failed to answer numerous key questions, in part because, as you noted, “OSHA is currently investigating the events of December 10, and Amazon is ...also conducting its own internal investigation. These investigations are ongoing and will not be completed for many months.”²

That OSHA investigation was completed and made public on April 26, 2022. The findings of that investigation are troubling.³ Although Amazon told us in its January 3, 2022 response that “safety is our top priority,”⁴ the OSHA findings revealed glaring gaps in Amazon’s safety procedures, including flawed safety training, inadequate emergency procedures, and the inability of Amazon managers to follow the procedures that were in place. These findings reveal a wholly inadequate safety culture at Amazon, which potentially contributed to the death of six workers and, if not addressed, will continue to put thousands more workers across the country at risk.

1. Problems with safety training for Amazon workers

We asked Amazon about training in emergency procedure for company employees and contractors. Amazon told us in its January 3 response that “All Amazon employees, whether they are with us full-time, part-time, or just for a season, receive extensive safety training on their first day and throughout their time with the company. This includes training on weather

¹ Letter from Senators and Members of the House to Andy Jassy and Jeff Bezos, December 20, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2021.12.20%20Letter%20to%20Amazon%20re.%20Edwardsville.%20IL%20warehouse%20collapse.pdf>.

² Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon, to Sen. Warren and Reps. Bush and Ocasio-Cortez, Jan. 3, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Response%20Edwardsville%201.3.2022.pdf>.

³ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Letter to Mr. Mical Davis, Amazon.com Services LLC, re: Inspection No. 1568095, April 26, 2022, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/OSHA22599Amazon%20HAL%20-%205a1%20Letter%204.26.22.pdf>.

⁴ Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon, to Sen. Warren and Reps. Bush and Ocasio-Cortez, Jan. 3, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Response%20Edwardsville%201.3.2022.pdf>.

events.” You also indicated that “Amazon employees are trained on their site [Emergency Action Plan], including the requirements for training initially upon onboarding... Additionally, delivery partners operating out of the Edwardsville facility are given an onboarding safety orientation.”⁵

But OSHA identified major gaps in this training, reporting that, “Based on interviews with Amazon and DSP personnel, some employees did not recall the location of the DLI4 designated severe weather shelter-in-place. The personnel did not recall ever participating in any severe weather or shelter-in place drills. ... Some employees were unaware the designated tornado shelter was the restroom located in the northern portion of the building and instead took shelter in the restroom located in the southern portion of the building.”⁶

This OSHA finding raises serious concerns about the adequacy of Amazon’s safety training for workers in its Edwardsville facility and other facilities across the country.

2. Flaws and gaps in the Edwardsville Emergency Action Plan

Our letter asked for information and details about your Emergency Action Plan at your Edwardsville facility and at other facilities across the country. You neglected to provide the complete set of information we asked for. You did tell us that “The Edwardsville delivery station had an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that describes the processes, procedures, and training we use to keep everyone safe in the event of an emergency, including weather, fire, active shooters, hazardous material, and other dangerous events.”⁷

But according to OSHA, there were major gaps in this plan. The OSHA review found that the Edwardsville EAP “was not customized with specific instructions associated with the anticipated hazards expected for this facility and it contained elements that would not be encountered in Edwardsville, IL, such as a hurricane. The plan did not specifically identify the location of the designated shelter area for the facility.”⁸

3. The Inability of Amazon managers to follow emergency procedures in place at the Edwardsville facility

⁵ Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon, to Sen. Warren and Reps. Bush and Ocasio-Cortez, Jan. 3, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Response%20Edwardsville%201.3.2022.pdf>.

⁶ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Letter to Mr. Mical Davis, Amazon.com Services LLC, re: Inspection No. 1568095, April 26, 2022, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/OSHA22599Amazon%20HAL%20-%205a1%20Letter%204.26.22.pdf>.

⁷ Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon, to Sen. Warren and Reps. Bush and Ocasio-Cortez, Jan. 3, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Response%20Edwardsville%201.3.2022.pdf>.

⁸ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Letter to Mr. Mical Davis, Amazon.com Services LLC, re: Inspection No. 1568095, April 26, 2022, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/OSHA22599Amazon%20HAL%20-%205a1%20Letter%204.26.22.pdf>.

We also asked a series of questions about the extent to which safety protocols that were in place at Edwardsville were followed during the emergency. You told us that “Upon receiving the tornado warning from the National Weather Service at 8:06pm, site leaders immediately implemented the facility’s emergency action plan for a tornado. Our team utilized direct communications, oral and electronic, to instruct employees to shelter-in-place,” and that “we believe that our protocols were followed in accordance with OSHA standards and guidance, and Amazon training.”⁹

But this was not the case. Notably, OSHA found that managers at the Amazon facility were unable to implement the full EAP because “[t]he megaphone, identified by the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to be used to activate the shelter-in-place procedure, was locked in a cage and not accessible. Per the EAP, managers were to “[a]ctivate the audible warning method to alert personnel about the site emergency.”¹⁰ OSHA reported that instead, “[m]anagement adapted to the situation by verbally communicating warnings to personnel”¹¹ – though it is not clear if the verbal warnings were as effective as the use of the megaphone, particularly during what was, by all accounts, a chaotic emergency situation.

Your response to our letter was disappointing, because it revealed that your claim that “safety is our top priority” was false. In addition to the problems identified by the OSHA inspection, your letter reiterated in several other places that you would go no further than required by the letter of the law to keep your workers safe. For example, you indicated that “we believe that our protocols were followed in accordance with OSHA standards and guidance”¹² – which in this case, explicitly failed to protect the lives of your workers. You indicated that the building itself was “was constructed by TriStar Companies in compliance with International Building Code (IBC) standards and local jurisdictional requirements” – which only require that the building withstand 90 mile per hour winds.¹³ And you indicated that a FEMA “safe room” is not required by IBC or the local jurisdiction for these types of buildings, and one was not in place” in Edwardsville,¹⁴ despite selling multiple FEMA-compliant saferooms on your platform. You also did not address how your reliance on contractors and high turnover rates may have contributed to lack of emergency preparedness and put workers further at risk during the tornado.

The OSHA inspection and your response to our letter indicate that Amazon will do only the bare minimum – and sometimes less than that – to keep its workers safe. Additionally, ongoing

⁹ Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon, to Sen. Warren and Reps. Bush and Ocasio-Cortez, Jan. 3, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Response%20Edwardsville%201.3.2022.pdf>.

¹⁰ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Letter to Mr. Mical Davis, Amazon.com Services LLC, re: Inspection No. 1568095, April 26, 2022, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/OSHA22599Amazon%20HAL%20-%205a1%20Letter%204.26.22.pdf>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President, Public Policy, Amazon, to Sen. Warren and Reps. Bush and Ocasio-Cortez, Jan. 3, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amazon%20Response%20Edwardsville%201.3.2022.pdf>.

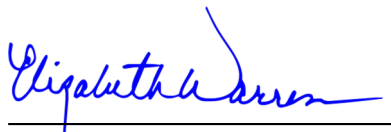
¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

evidence of worker exploitation and injury indicate that Amazon puts worker safety at risk in emergencies and day-to-day situations alike.¹⁵

Our concerns echo those raised by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform in its investigation into the Edwardsville disaster and Amazon's treatment of employees across the company during severe weather events. To shed light on Amazon's deficient safety protocols as outlined by OSHA, your troubling labor practices, and the questions raised by inconsistencies in your responses to our previous letter, we urge you to comply immediately with the Committee's March 31, 2022, request for documents.¹⁶

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

¹⁵ The Strategic Organizing Center, "The Injury Machine: How Amazon's Production System Hurts Workers," April 2022, https://thesoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/The-Injury-Machine_How-Amazons-Production-System-Hurts-Workers.pdf.

¹⁶ House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Letter from Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Rep. Cori Bush, to Mr. Andy Jassy, Amazon CEO, March 31, 2022, <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2022-03-31.CBM%20AOC%20Bush%20to%20Jassy-A%20re%20Document%20Request.pdf>.