



November 1, 2020

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate  
309 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward Markey  
United States Senate  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joseph Kennedy III  
United States House of Representatives  
304 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Warren, Senator Markey, and Representative Kennedy,

In response to your October 14, 2020 letter, we strongly refute claims that we have misled anyone about injury risks at our Fulfillment Center (FC) in Fall River, Massachusetts (BOS7). Safety is Amazon's top priority at BOS7 and all of our facilities. This was true when we responded to your questions in January 2020, and is true today. At Amazon, we are known for obsessing over customers—but we also obsess about our employees and their safety.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss Amazon's safety program in Massachusetts and specifically BOS7, where we have employed approximately 3800 people this year. Amazon is committed to creating and sustaining safe, high paying jobs with benefits in a part of the state that struggles for inbound investment.

Before turning to your specific questions, we would like to address the report in *Reveal* from the Center of Investigative Reporting discussed in your October 14, 2020 letter, and clear up confusion regarding the "serious injury rate" discussed in the *Reveal* article.

The internal documents reviewed by the reporter demonstrate Amazon's deep focus on the safety of our teams. We look at a variety of metrics, both leading and lagging, to evaluate the effectiveness of our safety programs. The *Reveal* article discusses a "serious injury rate," however, there is not an OSHA or industry "serious injury rate." We believe the reporter is referring to the commonly used DART rate, which stands for "Days Away, Restricted, or Transferred." The DART rate does not differentiate between the type or severity of injuries, and it also includes lesser injuries, such as sprains and strains, in cases where the employee is staying away from work until their medical restrictions are removed.

As a company, we are constantly learning and improving. We focus on inventing programs that create a safe work environment and we provide comprehensive health benefits starting on day one of employment. We continue to see improvements in injury prevention and reduction

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through our many programs, including our work focusing on improving ergonomics, delivering guided physical and wellness exercises, improving workstation setup and design, and separating pedestrians from powered industrial equipment (e.g. forklifts).

We would be happy to give you a tour of one our fulfillment centers to observe our injury prevention programs and witness our dedicated health and safety professionals, along with our operations leaders, at work continuously inspecting and evaluating safety measures and working conditions.

Answers to your specific questions follow.

- 1. In your January 6, 2020 letter to us, you told us that there was a 34.3 reduction from 2018 to 2019 in the Lost Time Injury rate at the BOS7 facility in Fall River “during the peak season.” But documents obtained by Reveal found that “[t]he Fall River warehouse’s rate of lost-time injuries . . . was more than 50% higher in 2019 compared with 2018 and six times the industry average.” How do you reconcile this information with the statements in your January letter?”**

The information that we provided in the January 6, 2020 letter is accurate. The Lost Time Injury rate (LTIR) at BOS7 during the peak season of 2019 was 11.64, representing a 34.3% reduction from 2018 (17.70) due to the continuous improvement initiatives executed locally and companywide. This information was provided in response to your request for injury rates at BOS7 during the peak period ending in December 2019, and our response reflected the period between “Black Friday” after Thanksgiving and ending at Christmas.

Rather than comparing the differences between the four-week peak periods in 2018 and 2019, the numbers cited in the *Reveal* article refer to full year-over-year statistics. Given our focus on constant improvement, BOS7 implemented a number of steps throughout 2019, which led to the peak to peak improvements that we highlighted in the previous letter.

- 2. Given Amazon data shows spikes in worker injuries during Prime Days, what changes did Amazon implement this year to protect workers from injury during the October 13-14 Prime Days?**

Our leadership and administrative staff shift to focus primarily on the production floor to uphold our standards during large sales events, including on Prime Day 2020. While this approach involves additional safety audits and team members engaged around safety standards, this is not isolated to safety. We take an “all hands on deck” approach to our busiest days and add more leadership and auditing roles to maintain the same standards and expectations we would have on any other day. During Prime Week at BOS7 this year, we increased our auditing of potential injury areas with safety staff and safety coaches, which included focus on finding and correcting unsafe product staging in our bin and cage areas.

- a. Does target performance change throughout the year, and, if so, what determines that change?**

Yes. We summarize the processes at BOS7 associated with time periods below.

- 2020 Pre-COVID (applicable until March 17, 2020): Amazon adjusts targets in response to employees' performance typically at least once every quarter. We always set targets at the 25th percentile performance (so that 75% of employees are already meeting or exceeding the target). New employees still in their learning period and who have not worked more than 160 hours in their job path are exempted from target performance management, as are employees who have not worked a minimum of 5 hours in the previous 5 weeks of the period.
- March 18, 2020 - October 6, 2020: We suspended performance management between March 18, 2020 and October 6, 2020 network-wide.
- Current: Amazon resumed performance management on October 7, 2020, implementing a revised productivity policy that reduced the performance expectation feedback from 5% of the building's population to 3%. Target expectations remained at the 25th percentile, described above. The policy includes extra time for employees to sanitize their work areas, wash their hands, and remain socially distant.

***b. Did Amazon change target performance expectations for workers during Prime Days this year, and, if so, how? Did they increase or decrease?***

No. Target performance expectations did not change for Prime Days in 2020, but we resumed performance management on October 7, 2020, after being paused as discussed in 2(a).

***c. Please provide representative examples of target performance expectations for pickers and other warehouse workers in BOS7 throughout the year, including non-peak periods and during Prime Days in 2020.***

Examples of current expected pick targets at BOS7 as of October 19, 2020 are 21 items per hour in the "order pick low density" job action, 31 items per hour in "multi relay pick," and 36 items per hour in the "order picker/pick" job function. Other roles in the warehouse have different target expectations. Gift wrappers, for example, are expected to wrap 21 items in an hour. These were the targets before, during, and after Prime Days.

***3. An Amazon spokesperson said the company will "ensure we have adequate leadership and safety staff on hand during these peak times." Did Amazon increase the number of safety staff at warehouses for Prime Days this year? If so, what additional safety staff were at warehouses during Prime Days? How many warehouses had this additional safety staff?***

Please see the response to question 2 regarding our increase of leadership presence on the production floor to ensure that our standards do not erode during large sales events.

Regarding BOS7, we bolstered our staffing by utilizing our safety team members, Safety Specialists, OMRs, and Safety Coaches each shift to monitor and audit safety practices. Safety Coaches are employees who are trained in and exhibit exemplary safety practices. They coach their fellow employees on ergonomics and safe practices.

As part of our COVID-19 response measures, BOS7 also added Social Distancing coaches who are trained to monitor temperature screening and symptom questionnaires at entry and audit work areas, hallways, and breakrooms to remind employees about social distancing best practices.

**4. In a February 21, 2020 response to Senate offices, you stated that the goal of target performance expectations is “to ensure the performance expectations are attainable, while prioritizing safety.”**

**a. What specific data does Amazon collect on workers’ “rate” and “time off task” during a shift?**

Amazon, like many businesses, sets goals for employee productivity. Our performance expectations are designed so that only a small percentage of employees, less than 5% on average, who are not meeting minimum productivity goals may receive coaching for improvement.

For target performance, Amazon measures employee productivity by tracking the units per hour that employees process (e.g., units scanned per hour or units packaged per hour, depending on the assigned task). (See question 2 for more detail.)

For Time Off Task (“ToT), Amazon measures the amount of time employees spend working on their assigned tasks during their shift via the scanners that workers use to scan items, bins, and packages. ToT is only tracked once five minutes or more of unplanned time elapses between activity on the scanners, and that time is aggregated into a ToT total for the day.

**b. When and how do workers see their “rate” and “time off task” information?**

Employees are able to access the most real time data of performance through their manager and through the self-service Performance Awareness Kiosks (PAK), which are updated daily. At BOS7, PAKs are available in various locations near work areas. In the case of ToT information, managers will let employees know if their unscheduled ToT exceeds 30 minutes and where the amount of ToT for the employee is an outlier to their peers.

**c. When and how do managers see this information?**

Managers have access to employee performance measures through a variety of systems and reports available in real time and produced in daily and weekly snapshots.

**d. How long is data retained from any specific workday or about any specific worker?**

We do not delete target-related information during an employee's employment.

**e. How does Amazon use this data to determine whether expectations are "attainable?"**

Targets are set at the 25th percentile performance (that is so that 75% of employees are already meeting or exceeding the target) and no corrective action is taken for employees unless they are failing to achieve their targets and are in the bottom 3%-5% of performers.

**f. Has Amazon ever reduced target performance expectations in response to a review of the data?**

Yes. We frequently reduce expectations for a number of reasons, as operating conditions change. When Amazon implemented its revised productivity policy on October 7, 2020, we adjusted performance targets to include extra time for employees to sanitize their work areas, wash their hands, and remain socially distant.

**g. What team at Amazon is responsible for "collect[ing] data on performance expectations and study[ing] their effectiveness?"**

Various teams at Amazon collect and review data on performance expectations and effectiveness.

**i. In addition to monitoring data, does this team conduct interviews with workers?**

There are many teams at Amazon focused on ensuring our employees are safe and successful and we have a variety of mechanisms to gain direct feedback from employees.

**ii. Does this team monitor intake with Amazon Onsite Medical Representatives?**

**iii. What other data points does this team consider besides monitoring of whether workers meet target performance expectations?**

We use a variety of data points, tools, and personnel (i.e., mentors, Safety Coaches) to engage with employees regarding performance expectations, including safety, quality, and barriers to performance reported by employees. This focus starts with Day One training for new employees in the classroom and continues through audits and check-ins with employees

in their work areas. We also train employees to slow down if they cannot maintain safe behaviors and proper quality.

**5. What are the consequences for workers who do not meet target performance expectations?**

**a. How do managers respond if a worker goes over “time off task” or makes less “rate” than their colleagues on any given shift?**

Targets and are set at the 25th percentile performance (that is so that 75% of employees are already meeting or exceeding the target) and no corrective action is taken for employees unless they are failing to achieve their targets and are in the bottom 3%-5% of performers. Before any coaching or disciplinary actions are taken, managers must first have a conversation with employees where exceptions, such as restroom breaks, prayer time, and time to clean stations are taken into account. Managers also observe the employee’s work to see if they have problems with the working area, process gaps, or challenges that might be affecting their target. Where possible, the manager will remove barriers (i.e., repairing the work station, providing needed tools and supplies) or coach them on ways to improve and work more efficiently. In some cases, employees may receive additional training.

**b. What internal policies or documents govern these consequences?**

We have several policies for BOS7, including the Employee Handbook and Standards of Conduct, North American Customer Fulfillment (NACF) Performance Management Policy, and ToT Policy.

**c. How are workers informed about these consequences?**

We communicate in a variety of ways to ensure all changes in our operations are effectively communicated. This can include announcements at our standup meetings, posters throughout the facility, and direct conversations with our leadership team. Amazon clearly communicates expectations about job performance to all employees. Additionally, for employees who receive coaching for ToT or target performance, their manager outlines steps taken for underperformance, including that further underperformance may lead to termination.

**d. How many workers were terminated for excessive write ups due to “time off task” and “rate” in 2020?**

At BOS7, 25 employees have been terminated for ToT and two for missing performance related targets to date this year, as of October 21, 2020. This is compared to a total workforce of approximately 3800 employed by BOS7 during the same time period.

**6. In your February 21, 2020 response letter, you stated that managers follow up with an associate if “our leaders cannot account for the whereabouts of an associate for a significant amount of time.”**

**a. What, specifically, does Amazon consider “a significant amount of time”?**

We count unplanned times greater than five minutes throughout the scheduled shift and where the total of the time is 30 minutes or more AND the employee is an outlier to their peers for ToT, then a manager would engage with the employee to better understand what the issue might be.

**b. What are the consequences for workers that cannot be accounted for?**

See 6a.

**c. What is the internal process for verifying that the information is accurate?**

See 6a.

**7. You told our offices: “we constantly survey our leaders and associates about their sentiment around workplace safety, while acting on opportunities to improve.”**

**a. What surveys do you conduct of sentiments among warehouse associates?**

We have numerous mechanisms to take direct feedback from our employees on their safety concerns, including our open door policy, Voice of the Employee board, and, pre-COVID-19, monthly GM meetings and All Hands events where our teams field questions and concerns from our employees.

**b. Are survey participants guaranteed anonymity?**

There are numerous types of surveys where some are anonymous and others where the results are anonymous to the local and in chain leadership, but are not fully anonymous to the teams who manage the systems.

**c. Have you ever conducted a survey at BOS7? If so, please provide the results of any surveys.**

We use a variety of methods to engage with employees, as described in responses to questions 4(g)(i-iii) and 7(a), and receive various points of data through these engagements.

**d. Please provide an example of when Amazon “act[ed] on opportunities to improve” based on worker survey responses.**

At BOS7, we continually make changes based on employee feedback. This year we made large investments at BOS7 based on this feedback. These investments include our parking lot, where we installed additional traffic control devices and

signage. At our Outbound dock, we installed an additional package line to reduce congestion and support more ease in the flow of packages. We also made our Safety Coach program permanent following feedback from roundtables with our employees.

***e. Did Amazon make any changes at the facility where a worker survey found workers believe their job “requires [them] to move too quickly, so [they are] forced to either cut corners or not make rate?”***

At BOS7, we have adjusted targets in particular paths due to feedback from employees. For example, we saw in 2019 that bin fullness impacted stow targets; leadership exempted productivity feedback for employees in those stow paths. In the same year, packers in specific functions told the General Manager in a roundtable that their targets were too high due to the size of product they received. We collected data that confirmed this and these packers received adjusted targets due to that data.

***8. Has Amazon implemented any measures recommended by OSHA after fulfillment center inspections in the past five years? Please provide details.***

Yes. Amazon cooperates fully with OSHA when an inspection is conducted at any of our sites. Since 2018, OSHA has completed two inspections in our Massachusetts sites. Only one inspection resulted in a citation for improper labeling of on an electrical panel, which we immediately fixed. (A third inspection is ongoing.) OSHA inspections are just one of the many opportunities Amazon uses to improve the quality of the working conditions at our sites. We do not rely solely on OSHA inspections to identify and correct hazards. Instead, each site conducts daily, weekly, and monthly inspections and audits to ensure all safety standards are met. This includes life safety inspections, yards audits, contractor safety, and since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we regularly perform social distancing audits. We also thoroughly investigate all incidents. These audits, inspections, and incident investigations are tracked for completion and findings are reviewed to ensure all necessary corrective actions are taken to continually improve work conditions and behaviors at our sites. Everyone is encouraged to be vigilant in identifying and raising their concerns.

***9. How many safety pilot programs does Amazon currently have active? How many safety pilot programs has Amazon started since 2018?***

We currently have 59 open field team projects across the NACF network in various stages of scoping, piloting, and deployment. Not all projects enter or leave the pilot phase. During 2018, we launched approximately 40 projects, and in 2019 added approximately 15 additional projects. Site leaders may also action local programs. These programs do not include programs within standard work actioned by our worldwide workplace health and safety teams.

***a. How many of these pilot programs were active on Prime Days in 2018, 2019, and 2020? and***



- b. How many of these pilot programs were paused or not implemented during Prime Days in 2018, 2019, and 2020? and**
- c. How many of these pilot programs did Amazon designate to be operations only “during non-Peak?”**

During peak, we typically pause our pilot programs. We view this is a critical time for our customers and experimentation or operational changes of any kind are not allowed.

**10. You told our offices that “the Fall River facility conducts workplace audits on a daily basis to proactively identify hazards,” and the site “examines their injury data at weekly Safety Review Board meetings and creates injury reduction plans and actions from this data.”**

**a. What is included in the daily workplace audit?**

At BOS7, we conduct a variety of daily safety audits with weekly goals, including area organization, dock PIT/pedestrian risks, cage and bin audits, trailer audits, bin audits, yard audits, products area checklist inspections, and multiple audits required by local, state, and federal regulations, including programs regulated by OSHA. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also conduct audits related to COVID-19 prevention measures.

**b. Has the Safety Review Board ever recommended or considered decreasing target performance expectations as a party of an injury reduction plan?**

No. This has not been necessary, given the target adjustments we already make. Safety Review Boards usually identify training or engineering controls as recommendations best suited to improve safety.

**11. You told our offices that, at BOS7, you use a “Safety Leadership Index (SLI)” program, which involves “ask[ing] associates a series of safety questions each day as they log-in” and that Amazon “use[s] the responses . . . to quickly spot potential problems and remediate them.”**

**a. Do any of the questions in the SLI program ask workers about whether their performance target expectations or rate impact their safety?**

We do not have an SLI question with this specific language, but we do ask about site leadership’s response to safety, and whether safety is prioritized at the site.

**b. You stated that through this tool, “we have taken several corrective actions across our networks.” What are those actions?**

Some of the steps we have taken based on SLI include updating housekeeping schedules for cleaning and organization prior to shift turnover, and relocating pallets for organization and housekeeping.

**12. You told our offices, “the Fall River facility has rolled out a micro stretching program to be completed at breaks.”**

**a. What is the goal of this program, and why was it implemented?**

These quick 30-second moments, which are done during their day at their work area is, intended to create stretch and flex opportunities for employees to reset mentally and physically during the day for their well-being.

**b. Why is this safety program being implemented during workers’ break time, and not during their working time?**

See 12a and 13a.

**13. You told our offices that Fall River has an Injury Prevention Specialist who is “available to assist with more intensive stretching and body movement techniques.”**

**a. Is this available to workers during their working time?**

Yes. The Injury Prevention Specialists (IPS) spend time on the floor and work with employees during their work time to proactively address and prevent conditions that contribute to the development and exacerbation of soft tissue injuries and musculoskeletal disorders.

**b. Is this considered “time off task”?**

No.

We are proud of the work we are doing today, and have always done, to ensure the safety of our employees. My staff and I are available at any time to answer any questions you have about our workplace protections.

Sincerely,



Brian Huseman  
Vice President, Public Policy