



January 3, 2022

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Cori Bush
United States House of Representatives
563 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
United States House of Representatives
216 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Warren and Representatives Bush and Ocasio-Cortez,

This is in response to your December 20, 2021 letter regarding the devastating tornado that struck an Amazon delivery station in Edwardsville, Illinois, on December 10. Tragically, despite the heroic efforts of the team, we lost six members of our Amazon family. We will never forget those who were lost in this disaster—DeAndre Morrow, Kevin Dickey, Clayton Cope, Etheria Hebb, Larry Virden, and Austin McEwen.

From the beginning, our focus has been on supporting our employees and partners, the families who lost loved ones, the surrounding community, and all of those affected by the tornadoes. That effort has included providing relief supplies, services, and food, and donating \$1 million to the Edwardsville Community Foundation. We have also launched a disaster relief fund, administered by the Emergency Assistance Foundation (EAF), to provide our employees and partners grants for expenses related to housing, transportation, and other immediate needs such as food and clothing. This is in addition to working directly with our team, affected employees and partners, and their families to support them through this challenging time.

Safety is our top priority. We have nearly 8,000 safety professionals who use Amazon's innovation, technology, and data insights to keep our employees safe. We invested more than \$300 million on safety in 2021 alone. 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 events, which can be unpredictable and severe. With that background context, our answers to your questions regarding the incident are as follows:

- 1. What was the worker structure at the Edwardsville warehouse in December 2021?**
 - a. How many workers at the warehouse were Amazon employees?**
 - i. What is the median time that these employees had been working for the company?**
 - ii. What percentage are part-time versus full-time workers?**
 - b. How many workers at the warehouse were contractors?**
 - c. How many workers worked for Delivery Service Partners?**

The building directly impacted by the tornado is a delivery station that opened in July 2020. Delivery stations prepare orders for last-mile delivery to our customers. The Edwardsville facility is approximately 600,000 square feet, and has 190 employees with varied tenure, 79 percent of whom are full-time employees. The delivery station also works with five locally-owned small business Delivery Service Partners (DSPs), who employ approximately 350 delivery associates (DAs) that deliver packages from the site. DSPs are independent businesses whose owners hire, train, develop, and manage a team of 40-100 DAs and run a fleet of 20-40 vans, on average. Amazon Flex is the delivery program through which individuals pick up and deliver packages using their own vehicles and can choose work that fits their schedule. There were 50 scheduled Amazon Flex routes at the Edwardsville facility on December 10.

- 2. What internal communication took place between Amazon (corporate) and Amazon workers and franchise company workers in your Edwardsville warehouse on December 9 and 10, 2021?**
 - a. How did you communicate with workers, contractors, and franchises?**
 - b. Did Amazon require workers in the Edwardsville warehouse to remain at work despite the issuance of the tornado warning?**
 - c. Did you provide any guidance or flexibility to workers and contractors regarding not coming into work or leaving work early given the tornado warning?**
 - d. Did workers from the Edwardsville warehouse ask permission from their supervisors to go home? If so, what was the response?**
 - e. Were franchise shipping companies directed or given flexibility to stop – or told to continue – pickups from the Edwardsville warehouse?**

It is important to clarify at the outset the difference between a tornado watch announcement and a tornado warning. Your letter states that there was a tornado warning 36 hours before the tornado struck the Edwardsville facility. The Storm Prediction Center (under the National Weather Service) issued a tornado *watch* at 3:00pm on December 10 for a seven-state area, including portions of Southern Illinois. Tornado watch announcements are much more common than tornado warnings and do not indicate that a tornado, or even severe weather, has been reported. When there is a tornado watch announcement, Amazon follows local guidance and takes steps to protect our teams based on the information available to us at the time. A tornado warning, on the other hand, requires immediate action. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines clearly state to take shelter when there is a tornado warning.

As is standard practice, OSHA is currently investigating the events of December 10, and Amazon is cooperating fully with that inquiry while also conducting its own internal investigation. These investigations are ongoing and will not be completed for many months, but we want to be responsive to your request and share what we have learned thus far. 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. At the same time, we also began communicating with the DSPs (DSPs are not franchises) to advise that they instruct their DAs to shelter-in-place or seek shelter and stop delivering for the evening. To our knowledge, we do not have information about Amazon employees at this station asking permission to go home. DSPs were informed and were asked to have their drivers shelter-in-place.

- 3. What are your policies on fire, tornado, and severe weather safety at your warehouses?**
 - a. What specific, formal tornado safety protocols were in place at the Edwardsville facility?**
 - b. Were all of these protocols followed during the December 10 tornado?**
 - c. How often are safety drills performed?**
 - d. When were the last fire, tornado, and severe weather drills performed at the Edwardsville warehouse?**
 - e. What is the impact of your company's high worker turnover on ensuring these trainings are up to date for all workers? How do you ensure that all workers receive these trainings?**
 - f. Were the company's safety practices and standards regarding tornado safety modified in any way after the 2018 Baltimore tornado?**

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. We monitor weather patterns and alert team members in the event of severe weather using local weather alerts and Kepler 51. Kepler 51 is a data analytics company that specializes in using data solutions to reduce road accidents by identifying increased risk to safety or reduced mobility. On December 10, the program provided real-time alerts to staff on site before and during the tornado watch and warning, allowing site leaders to implement shelter protocols before the tornado struck the building. Our global security team also monitors and provides severe weather updates from various sources to sites.

As mentioned above, Amazon is currently conducting an internal investigation, in addition to supporting the OSHA investigation. At this time, we believe that our protocols were followed in accordance with OSHA standards and guidance, and Amazon training.

In compliance with OSHA's Emergency Action Plan standard, 29 C.F.R. § 1910.38(e)-(f), Amazon employees are trained on their site EAP, including the requirements for training initially upon onboarding and on an annual basis. Additionally, delivery partners operating out of the Edwardsville facility are given an onboarding safety orientation to help them become familiar with their surroundings, including what to do in case of an accident or emergency. Amazon requires all DSPs to comply with applicable laws and Amazon safety policies.

Regarding this weather incident and any others that have affected buildings across our network, we continually evaluate our safety programs and make significant investments in technology, such as the Weather Warning Systems, preparation, injury/illness prevention, and other areas. We follow all local, state, and federal regulations and change our operations and practices whenever required or recommended by public officials. The Edwardsville facility conducted two emergency drills on July 14 and October 28, 2021. In addition, the site conducted an emergency drill for building evacuation for fire/heat on August 3, 2021.

- 4. What is your current policy on warehouse workers having personal phones with them during their shift? What are your future plans on this topic?**

As was the case on December 10, our personal mobile phone policy allows for employees to keep their mobile phones with them while working for emergency use. We continually evaluate our policies and have shared with our employees that this policy will not change until further notice.

5. **What wind-related building code standards did the Edwardsville warehouse meet?**
 - a. **Did the warehouse have a “hardened” safe room that could withstand tornado winds and protect workers from falling debris?**
 - b. **If so, how many workers could fit in the safe room? Was the safe room used during the December 10 tornado?**
 - c. **Were Amazon’s building-related standards regarding tornado safety modified in any way after the 2018 Baltimore tornado?**

The building was constructed by TriStar Companies in compliance with International Building Code (IBC) standards and local jurisdictional requirements. The IBC and local jurisdictional requirements standards required a building of this type to withstand 90 mph winds, and the building permit was approved having met those requirements. The National Weather Service’s preliminary report found the tornado that struck the Amazon facility on December 10 was estimated to have wind speeds of up to 150 miles per hour.

Amazon follows OSHA’s § 1910.38 requirements for Emergency Action Plans (EAP) and establishes Severe Weather Assembly Areas—locations with signage in all buildings for individuals on site to assemble during severe weather events. These areas are sized and chosen to accommodate all individuals on the premises.

The term “safe room” is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) term, describing a room that provides near-absolute protection, based on FEMA’s current knowledge of tornadoes and hurricanes. A FEMA “safe room” is not required by IBC or the local jurisdiction for these types of buildings, and one was not in place.

6. **What support is Amazon providing families of the dead and injured workers, and workers who are no longer able to work at the Edwardsville facility?**

We are heartbroken over the loss of our teammates at the Edwardsville facility. We are committed to supporting their families, our workers and partners, and the local community, and we will be by their side through this crisis.

As noted above, in Edwardsville, we are offering employees, partners, and their families financial assistance, help with temporary housing, car rentals, and more. In the aftermath of the storm we set up an Amazon Resource Center (ARC) onsite to support impacted employees and the community. We distributed 5,500 meals to associates on site and donated 1,200 meals to the local Edwardsville community. Amazon provided financial support for lost personal items as well as up to \$25,000 to replace damaged vehicles. We created a virtual resource center, provided counseling services, and expanded our Amazon Relief Fund. In addition, we donated \$1 million to the Edwardsville Community Foundation, and we continue working with local and state officials to understand what is needed most in their recovery efforts.

We also donated \$1 million to the Team Western Kentucky Tornado Relief Fund and are working with more than a dozen state and local community organizations to support relief efforts in neighboring states. For example, we are working with Feeding America to support food banks with donations of ready-to-eat items for the most affected areas. We are also providing non-perishable food items for school food programs, and we are assisting health care providers like those at Jackson Purchase Medical Center in Mayfield, Kentucky, with essential supplies like thermal blankets. We will continue to donate more relief supplies as other humanitarian aid partners assess their needs and request support.

We are committed to Edwardsville, and are working with state and local leaders on rebuilding a thriving community with significant investments in good paying jobs with comprehensive benefits, as well as ensuring the highest safety standards for our employees and partners.

7. How are you ensuring that Amazon workers who cannot get to work at other facilities due to tornado damage are not punished for that, especially given numerous issues with employment and human relations systems?

We recognize the impact this tragic event has had on our workers and partners, their families, and the community. We continue to provide our employees and partners in need with access to temporary housing, resources to obtain transportation support, personal asset reimbursements, and Amazon Disaster Relief Fund information.

Across the community, our team continues to conduct outreach to all affected employees to discuss their needs and their timeline to return to work at a nearby station, and we provided pay through the end of 2021. We have offered 100 percent of affected associates and partners an opportunity to work at a nearby site. We are also providing flexibility for those unable to work in the new year. In addition, we are partnering with the DSPs and all of our contract companies in the affected areas to support them as they engage with their employees during this time.

In addition to the questions above, you also requested various categories of documents. Amazon shares your interest in determining what exactly happened during the tragic events of December 10, and in particular what transpired at our Edwardsville facility. At the moment, we are focused on conducting a thorough internal investigation and on cooperating with OSHA's formal inquiry. We have and will produce to OSHA all documents relevant to this matter and helpful to OSHA's investigation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Brian Huseman
Vice President, Public Policy

cc: Senators Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown, Edward Markey, Alex Padilla, Bernard Sanders, and Ron Wyden and Representatives Jamaal Bowman, Jesús García, Mondaire Jones, Barbara Lee, Andy Levin, James McGovern, Jerry McNerney, Ilhan Omar, Donald Payne, Jr., Ayanna Pressley, Jan Schakowsky, Rashida Tlaib, Paul Tonko, and Bonnie Watson Coleman.