

# Amazon workers stage pre-Christmas walkout at 2 Chicago-area delivery facilities

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Dozens of Amazon warehouse employees staged a walkout Wednesday at two Chicago-area delivery stations to demand higher pay and better working conditions, disrupting operations just days before Christmas.

The work stoppages began at about 4:30 a.m. in west suburban Cicero

and 8 a.m. at the Gage Park facility on Chicago's Southwest Side, according to Amazonians United Chicagoland, an organization representing local Amazon warehouse workers.

Ted Miin, a member of the labor organization who has worked for Amazon for nearly three years, said about 25 workers on the overnight shift at the Gage Park station left their posts early and gathered for a brief parking lot rally Wednesday morning.

"We know that we're overworked and underpaid and understaffed; we know that we're at greater risk for injury, greater risk for COVID infection," said Miin, 36, who lives in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood. "We know that we deserve more pay and safer staffing conditions. We're going to do what it takes to make Amazon take us seriously."

Delivery stations are the last-mile stop in the Amazon shipping process, where packages from the fulfillment centers are sorted and loaded into vans for delivery to the customers. More than half of the workers at the Gage Park station walked out with hours remaining on their shift and boxes piling up for delivery during the busy holiday shipping season, Miin said.

Starting pay for a warehouse "sortation associate" at the Gage Park station is \$15.30 an hour—nearly \$3 an hour below what comparable workers make at other Amazon delivery stations in Chicago, Miin said. The workers are looking for a \$3 an hour raise and a meaningful response from Amazon management addressing their concerns, he said.

In addition to better pay, the delivery [station](#) workers say they are "forced to move too fast," straining their bodies and walking over packages. They are demanding "fair pay" for the heavy work they do regularly during 10-hour overnight shifts throughout the pandemic,

according to Amazonians United Chicagoland.

"We respect the rights of employees to protest and recognize their legal right to do so," Amazon spokeswoman Barbara Agrait said in an emailed statement. "We are proud to offer employees leading pay, competitive benefits, and the opportunity to grow with our company."

In April, Amazon quashed efforts by workers at an Alabama warehouse to form the first union in the online retail giant's history, waging a campaign that resulted in a lopsided defeat for the unionization vote.

Amazon has more than 36,000 full- and part-time employees in Illinois at 20 fulfillment centers, 20 delivery stations and 28 Whole Foods grocery stores, among other locations, according to the company's website.

The Wednesday walkouts come at a crucial time for last-minute shoppers—just three days before Christmas. On its website, Amazon said Thursday is the last day to order from more than 15 million items eligible for one-day delivery. On Friday, shoppers can order from a smaller selection of items available for same-day delivery, or send food from Amazon Fresh, if groceries are the gift of choice.

"We wanted to cause some disruption," Miin said. "There's definitely going to be some delays there. There's no way they're moving all the packages that were supposed to go out today."

Miin said he hopes Amazon will take the workers "a little more seriously" following the walkout, and come to the table seeking to resolve the issues they've raised.

The group has not decided whether to return to work Thursday or continue the walkout, Miin said.

While Amazon is navigating labor strife at its [delivery](#) stations, the company announced plans Tuesday to create 450 corporate and technology jobs over the next few years at its Chicago Tech Hub. The company signed a lease for a 67,000-square-foot expansion to accommodate the new hires at 222 W. Adams St., where more than 1,000 Amazon employees currently work.

The new Chicago office space is expected to be open for employees in late 2022, Amazon said in a news release.

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