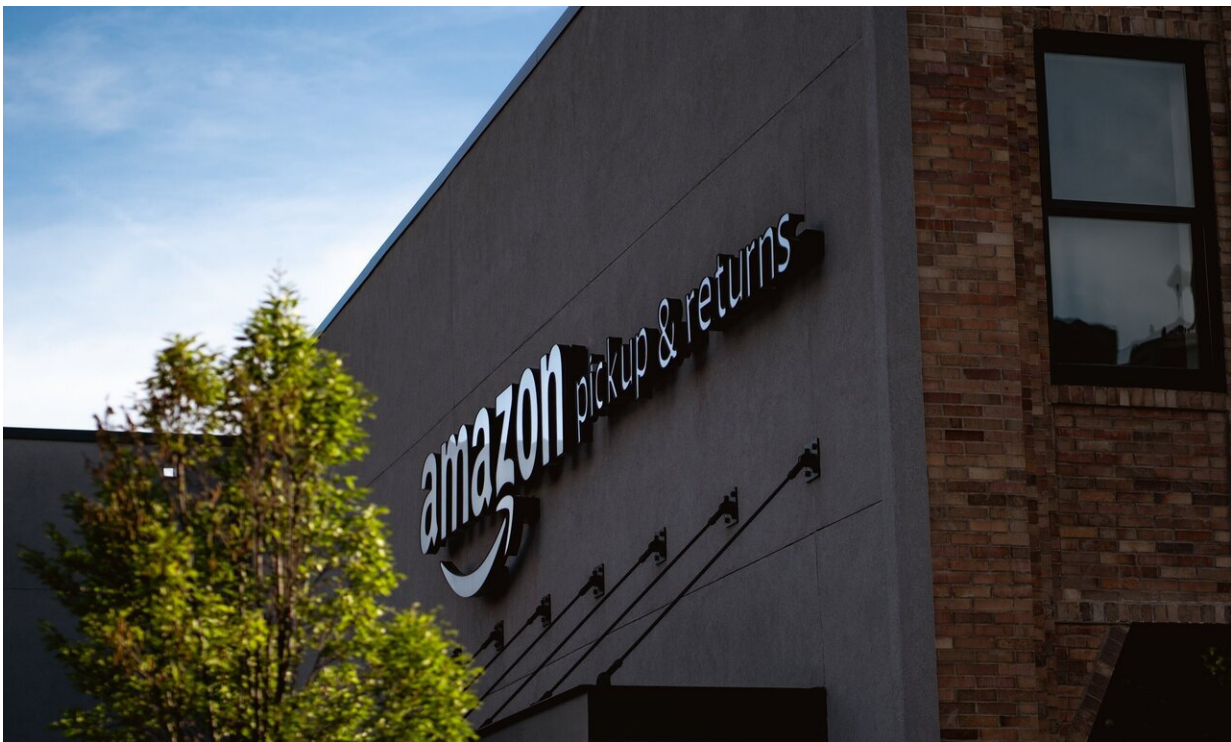


Amazon workers in San Bernardino allege anti-union actions and retaliation

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A group of workers at an Amazon air freight hub in San Bernardino that has been pushing for a \$5-per-hour pay increase and more robust safety measures accused the e-commerce giant of unfair labor practices in a Thursday filing with the National Labor Relations Board.

The group, which calls itself Inland Empire Amazon Workers United, alleged the company threatened an employee and ultimately terminated him in retaliation for activities including signing a petition for a wage increase, soliciting co-worker signatures, distributing literature, wearing a sticker in support of the wage increase and participating in a walkout, according to a copy of the filing reviewed by the Los Angeles Times.

Inland Empire Amazon Workers United also alleged in the filing that Amazon had interrogated employees about their union-related activities, issued write-ups to other employees in retaliation for wearing stickers in support of the wage increase and surveilled workers engaged in organizing.

Dozens of Amazon workers at the air freight hub walked off the job midday Friday to protest what they described in a statement as a "shameful" response by the company to their ongoing push for higher pay. In interviews, workers said the e-commerce giant has brought in anti-union labor consultants to their facility in recent months, contributing to a perception among workers that they are being watched and could face retaliation for speaking out to improve workplace conditions.

NLRB spokesperson Matt Hayward confirmed Friday the board's Region 31 office received the [allegations](#) related to Amazon's KSBD facility and is processing the filing.

Amazon disputes the allegations.

"We disagree with these claims," Amazon spokesperson Mary Kate Paradis said in an email. "We do not retaliate against employees for exercising their federally protected rights."

Inland Empire Amazon Workers United did not specify how many

workers are formally involved in the unfair labor practice allegations but said the claims were drawn from the experiences of at least a handful of workers.

At the protest Friday afternoon, workers, community activists, environmentalists and Teamsters union members supporting the effort crowded outside the San Bernardino fulfillment center known as KSBD, carrying red signs emblazoned with the message "Prime shoppers beware: Amazon air is unfair."

Organizers of the walkout estimated that about 100 workers participated and said they expected that number to increase as some employees on the night shift Friday also planned to walk out.

Javier Martinez, an Amazon worker who participated in the Friday protest, said the company was scanning the badges of workers who were entering and exiting the facility around the time of the planned walkout. He said this was not a normal practice at this facility. Martinez said typically Amazon simply has security staff glance at workers' badges at the door when they enter for their shift.

Martinez, 21, believes the company is seeking to collect names of workers who participated in the protest.

Retaliation is "a real concern," Martinez said, especially for his co-workers who have families to support.

Rex Evans, who works outdoors loading and unloading cargo from aircraft, marched with co-workers near the employee entrance, waving a flier titled "Caution" with a warning about an anti-union labor consultant he said has been a near-constant presence at the KSBD facility in recent weeks.

Evans and other workers began discussing in early September concerns that Amazon had dispatched anti-union consultants, including a woman named Miriam Navarro, who has introduced herself to workers as a representative of the company's employee relations department.

Navarro's LinkedIn profile describes her as a bilingual professional "with an extensive record of successfully facilitating communication and resolving work force issues as a labor/employee relations consultant." Navarro appears to be listed as "M Navarro" in publicly available disclosures with the U.S. Department of Labor of consultants who have worked with Amazon. Navarro did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Two workers told the L.A. Times that in recent months as they have become more engaged in the push for higher pay they have been interrogated by supervisors and are more frequently sent to do jobs in different departments instead of their typical assignments, which they believe is a tactic by the company to isolate them from co-workers.

Sara Fee, who works in an area of KSBD called the "outbound dock," said that a supervisor interrogated her and explicitly warned her the company was watching her. Fee also said Navarro, the labor consultant, has followed her around closely at work and seems to track and then approach co-workers to whom Fee has talked throughout the day.

Anna Ortega said on Thursday a manager sent her to retrieve a box of masks on the other side of the building. On her way there, Ortega said, she was approached by another supervisor who asked her how many workers were planning to walk out at the protest planned the next day.

"They wait until I'm alone and then they come up to me and ask questions," Ortega said. "Seeing how that played out, I was suspicious, because I was in a group of people and then I was sent away."

Amazon did not respond to questions about Fee's accusations. The company did not immediately respond to questions about supervisors' questioning of Ortega.

Paradis, the Amazon spokesperson, described the company's communications with employees about union activities as ordinary for the circumstances.

"Holding meetings about unions with employees is a process that's been legally recognized for more than 70 years," Paradis said in an email. "Like many other companies, we hold these meetings because it's important that everyone understands the facts about joining a union."

Amazon did not answer detailed questions about its use of labor consultants at KSBD.

A worker leading a union drive backed by the upstart Amazon Labor Union at another Amazon facility, ONT8, in nearby Moreno Valley, said earlier this week that she and other workers were required to attend anti-union meetings and were falsely told that their benefits would disappear if they unionized.

These meetings, known as "captive audience" meetings, are legal under labor board precedent. But earlier this year the board's general counsel issued a memo saying that the precedent did not align with underlying federal law, and said she planned to challenge it.

The accounts by Amazon workers in the Southern California facilities are reminiscent of other charges lobbed at the e-commerce giant earlier this year.

The Amazon Labor Union, which led workers at JFK8, a Staten Island warehouse, to a watershed victory in April, also criticized Amazon for

requiring workers at the facility to attend anti-union meetings and accused the company of threatening to withhold benefits from employees if they voted to unionize.

ALU alleged Amazon had inaccurately indicated to employees that they could be fired if the warehouse were to unionize and they failed to pay union dues. The NLRB found merit to some accusations leveled by the union. Amazon objected to the union win at JFK8, and the result is still being litigated through an appeals process.

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