

As Amazon shrinks, some workers' last days come 2 days before Christmas

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Some employees in Amazon's human resources department will clock out for the last time on Dec. 23, part of a broad push by the Seattle-based company to shrink its corporate workforce by 3% in coming months.

Amazon began cutting jobs this month, the first of a string of layoffs that is expected to reach about 10,000 workers. HR workers were offered voluntary buyouts the company put forward at the same time it began layoffs in other divisions.

Amazon, like many [tech companies](#), is looking to cut costs as it faces economic uncertainty and comes off a yearslong hiring spree. It's reviewing each division to make decisions "about what we believe we should change," CEO Andy Jassy wrote to employees in November.

Jassy told employees the cuts would continue through 2023.

The company is trimming head count in several divisions, including devices, books, human resources and stores. The devices group includes Amazon's voice assistant Alexa, its health device Halo and its home robot Astro, as well as Kindle, smart home products and the Echo speaker. Stores covers most of Amazon's consumer business, including online and physical stores, the marketplace for third-party sellers and Prime.

Amazon has been quiet about many details of the layoffs. It's still not clear how many people it will trim from each division, or how the layoffs will affect its Puget Sound headquarters.

In the devices division, some employees lost access to Amazon buildings, laptops and some messaging channels Nov. 23, the day before Thanksgiving. In its human resources division, some employees will mark their last day on Dec. 23.

"Coming out of the pandemic, there are several macroeconomic pressures happening in the world, and we are faced with some very hard decisions as we plan for 2023," the company wrote in an email offering its voluntary resignation package viewed by The Seattle Times.

Within People, Experience and Technology, Amazon's name for its human resources division, "the slowdown in hiring and the unusual environment" have affected some departments and "we need to take steps to more closely align with our business needs," the email read.

A spokesperson for Amazon declined to answer questions about the voluntary resignation package.

The company offered the package to some employees in the U.S. and India through an email on Nov. 15, the same day it began layoffs in its devices division. The package is available to workers at different experience levels, from entry level to manager. The package is available to workers at different experience levels, from entry level to manager, or L1 to L7 as Amazon internally describes its workforce.

Employees could apply for the package until Tuesday. They now have until Monday to change their minds and withdraw their applications.

By Dec. 8, Amazon will confirm or deny the applications. Some employees may be told they cannot take the buyout.

For those who are accepted, their last day is Dec. 23, unless a later date is "necessary for business purposes," according to a document detailing the package.

"I appreciate that everyone has different circumstances," Amazon's email to employees read. "The decision to opt into this program is entirely up to you."

In some parts of the human resources department, the push to trim the workforce comes during a time of year where workers are already stretched thin, according to one employee in Amazon's corporate HR office in Nashville.

That employee, who requested anonymity to protect their career at Amazon, said the team is already operating on mandatory overtime, adding roughly 10.5 hours each week.

"This is our peak," that employee said. "Right now it's causing a lot of issues with morale. People are like, 'Why should I push harder if I have to leave?'"

"I feel Amazon, who preached really looking at what's best for our customer over profit and thinking for the long-term, is not thinking in the long-term," they said.

The news that Amazon was looking to cut from the department came as a surprise, the employee said, as it did for many workers in the company's corporate ranks. Many [employees](#) found out about the layoffs from the media, rather than the company.

During a departmental meeting to discuss the resignation package the day after it was offered, leaders were "visibly shaking," that employee said.

The employee said they immediately began looking for jobs at Amazon and elsewhere. In the two weeks since sending out applications, they have not heard back about any openings at Amazon.

The voluntary resignation package includes severance pay, additional funds for [health insurance](#) and the forgiveness of any outstanding obligations, like a requirement to repay a moving bonus if an employee

quits.

The lump sum severance equals three months of an employee's [base salary](#) as well as one week base salary for every six months at the company. Employees can receive a maximum of 20 additional weeks in paid severance.

The package also includes at least \$297 per week for 12 weeks to cover health care premiums. Employees who take the resignation package will remain insured through the end of the year.

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