

OSHA cites 3 Amazon warehouses for high injury risk

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Federal safety investigators cited three Amazon warehouses for putting workers at serious risk of injury from the bending, twisting and lifting required to rapidly move and stack packages for hours.

Amazon rejected the findings by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and said it would appeal.

OSHA announced the citations Wednesday at warehouses in Florida, Illinois and New York, which were inspected as part of an ongoing investigation into Amazon's [safety practices](#) in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

The Seattle-based e-commerce giant, which earned \$33 billion in 2021, faces \$60,269 in total fines if OSHA prevails.

The fines are the maximum penalty under the Occupational Safety and Health Act's "general duty" clause, which requires employers to provide a safe working environment, said Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health Doug Parker. But in a briefing with reporters, Parker dismissed the idea that Amazon could easily absorb the penalty rather than shoulder the cost of changing its practices, saying the company is legally required to take action or face more serious consequences.

"Each of these inspections found work processes that were designed for speed but not [safety](#), and they resulted in serious worker injuries," Parker said, adding that Amazon "continues to conduct business as usual" despite serious injury rates at warehouses that were nearly double the industry average in 2021.

Parker said the Amazon warehouses in New York and Florida had DART rates—meaning days away from work, job restrictions or transfers due to injuries—that were triple the industry average of 4.7 injuries per 100 [workers](#).

Amazon has itself acknowledged its injury rates for its warehouse workers are higher compared to its peers but says it has invested millions of dollars in improving its safety record.

Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said OSHA's "allegations don't reflect the reality of safety at our sites."

"Over the last several months we've demonstrated the extent to which we work every day to mitigate risk and protect our people, and our publicly available data show we've reduced [injury](#) rates nearly 15% between 2019 and 2021," Nantel said.

OSHA said workers at the three facilities were at high risk of lower back injuries and other [musculoskeletal disorders](#) because of repeated bending, twisting and lifting and as they race to transfer heavy packages to and from carts, conveyer belts, trailers and tall shelves.

Parker said workers were clocked making these repetitive moves up to nine times per minute.

OSHA recommended a series of remedies including providing machinery that would reduce the need for workers to bend and twist, lift packages to dangerous heights, or walk too far with heavy loads. It also recommended providing more frequent breaks and job rotations.

Amazon says those are the kinds of policies the company has already been implementing. The company cites its partnership with the National Safety Council to develop [best practices](#), and says workers are regularly reminded to take breaks and join stretching groups.

In an emailed statement, the company said it continually strives to reduce the risk of items becoming dislodged and falling on workers "including assessing and revising engineering protocols, regularly training employees, and continually assessing injuries and near-misses to identify additional ways to improve [workplace safety](#)."

Amazon said "we strongly disagree with OSHA's claims" that it has

ignored health and [safety standards](#).

The inspections were conducted last summer after referrals from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, which has encouraged former and current Amazon workers to directly report [safety issues](#) to them. In addition to potential safety violations, the office has said it is investigating "possible fraudulent conduct designed to hide injuries from OSHA and others."

Last month, OSHA issued 14 citations against Amazon for failing to properly record injuries at warehouses in five states.

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