

Amazon workers upset over job cuts, return-to-office mandate stage walkout

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Employees walk through a lobby at Amazon's headquarters on Nov. 13, 2018, in Seattle. A group of Amazon workers upset about recent layoffs, a return-to-office mandate and the company's environmental impact is planning a walkout at its Seattle headquarters Wednesday. Credit: AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File

A group of Amazon workers upset about recent layoffs, a return-to-office mandate and the company's environmental impact is planning a walkout at the company's Seattle headquarters Wednesday.

The lunchtime protest comes a week after Amazon's annual shareholder meeting and a month after a policy took effect requiring workers to [return to the office three days per week](#).

"We respect our employees' rights to express their opinions," [the company said in a statement](#).

As of Tuesday night, more than 1,800 employees had pledged to walk out around the world, with about 870 in Seattle, according to Amazon Employees for Climate Justice, a climate change advocacy group founded by Amazon workers.

While some plan to gather at the Amazon Spheres—a four-story structure in downtown Seattle that from the outside looks like three connected glass orbs—others will participate remotely.

Brad Glasser, an Amazon spokesperson, said there has been a good energy on the company's South Lake Union campus and at its other urban centers since more employees returned to the office. More than 20,000 workers, however, signed a petition urging Amazon to reconsider the return-to-office mandate.

"As it pertains to the specific topics this group of employees is raising," Glasser said in a statement, "we've explained our thinking in different forums over the past few months and will continue to do so."



The exterior of the Amazon headquarters is shown in Seattle Friday, March 20, 2020. A group of Amazon workers upset about recent layoffs, a return-to-office mandate and the company's environmental impact is planning a walkout at its Seattle headquarters Wednesday. Credit: AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File

In [a February memo](#), Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said the company made its decision to return corporate employees to the office at least three days a week after observing what worked during the pandemic. Among other things, he said senior leadership watched how staff performed and talked to leaders at other companies. He said they concluded employees tended to be more engaged in person and collaborate more easily.

In a note asking Amazon employees to pledge their participation in the walkout, organizers said Amazon "must return autonomy to its teams, who know their employees and customers best, to make the best decision

on remote, in-person, or hybrid work, and to its employees to choose a team which enables them to work the way they work best."

Some employees have also complained that Amazon has been slow to address its impact on climate change. Amazon, which relies on fossil fuels to power the planes, trucks and vans that ship packages all over the world, has an enormous carbon footprint. Amazon workers have been vocal in criticizing some of the company's practices.

In an annual statement to investors, Amazon said it aims to deploy 100,000 electric delivery vehicles by 2030 and reach net-zero carbon by 2040. But walkout organizers contend the company must do more and commit to zero emissions by 2030.

The walkout follows widespread cost-cutting at Amazon, where layoffs have affected workers in advertising, human resources, gaming, stores, devices and Amazon Web Services, the company's cloud computing division. The company has [cut 27,000 jobs since November](#).

Like other tech companies, including Facebook parent Meta and Google parent Alphabet, Amazon ramped up hiring during the pandemic to meet the demand from homebound Americans who were increasingly shopping online to keep themselves safe from the virus.

Amazon's workforce, in warehouses and offices, doubled to more than 1.6 million people in about two years. But demand slowed as the worst of the pandemic eased. The company began pausing or canceling its warehouse expansion plans last year.

Amid growing anxiety over the potential for a recession, Amazon in the past few months shut down a subsidiary that's been selling fabrics for nearly 30 years, shuttered Amazon Care, its hybrid virtual, in-home care service, and closed Amazon Smile, a philanthropic program.

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