

Workers at Philly-area Amazon warehouse walked out on Cyber Monday

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Amazon workers at a fulfillment center that services Philadelphia and South Jersey walked out of work on Monday, demanding better pay and working conditions as part of a multistate organizing effort.

About two dozen workers walked out of the West Deptford, New Jersey, facility about 3:50 p.m. on Cyber Monday—the Monday after Thanksgiving when Amazon and many other online retailers run numerous discounts and promotions.

Workers who walked out gathered in the facility's parking lot and spoke about mandatory overtime they've been working, as well as difficulties faced by seasonal hires when transitioning to full-time status.

"I was here as a seasonal for over a year before I was finally converted," said Gaeton Grasso, adding that it was unclear throughout that time whether seasonal workers were going to be laid off at some point. "I should be making more," he said, but that time as a seasonal worker didn't count toward semiannual raises.

Pay starts at \$19 per hour for the "tier-one" warehouse workers who protested Monday.

Eli Lotz, a [worker](#) who helped organize the walkout, said many workers were told they could be fired for participating in the action. Organizers were unsure how many participants to expect in the walkout, but Lotz said they were pleased with the outcome.

"We wanted to get a group together to show that we could do this without getting fired, and that's what we did," Lotz said. "This is the kind of thing we need to do to get what we want."

Monday's action arose out of a larger organizing effort at Amazon facilities. More than 20 Amazon organizing committees, including organizers from West Deptford, gathered in October to create a list of demands for their employer.

The organizers are seeking pay increases, including a starting wage of

\$25 per hour and a \$2 per hour bonus for peak times and [safety improvements](#), including the presence of trained health-care professionals on site. They also want the ability to wear one earbud in roles where that would not cause a safety problem.

More broadly, the organizers are calling on Amazon to end retaliation against organizing efforts and recognize its drivers as employees rather than subcontractors. They also want the company to end automated performance write-ups based on productivity metrics and disciplinary measures based on those metrics.

"They hold people to unreasonable expectations of rate, and they write up people who don't meet those expectations," Lotz said. "There's a pretty high rate of injuries because of people working constantly in repetitive motions. Mentally, it's really draining."

Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the walkout.

Representatives from other unions and a few workers from other Amazon facilities rallied outside the West Deptford fulfillment center on Monday in support of the walkout, serving pizza to the workers who participated.

"This is the time of year when they push us to our breaking limit," said Nate Gosweiler, an employee of the Amazon delivery station in Northeast Philadelphia, who went to support West Deptford workers. "Unless all the workers are involved together ... this company won't change their actions."

Gosweiler said his facility and the West Deptford fulfillment center are two of three Amazon locations in the Philadelphia region that have taken collective action with the Amazonians United organization. The other is

a delivery station in South Jersey.

Workers and various labor organizations around the United States and world have been holding actions against Amazon on Black Friday and Cyber Monday for several years, including strikes at certain locations this year.

Organizing Amazon workers have seen some high-profile wins, such as one fulfillment center in Staten Island successfully unionizing last year, but they have also faced resistance and legal challenges.

The company has numerous facilities in the Philadelphia region, including one that opened this fall.

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