

# Amazon fined nearly \$6 million for violations at Inland Empire warehouses

June 19 2024, by Suhauna Hussain, Los Angeles Times

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

California has fined Amazon nearly \$6 million for violating a law meant to protect warehouse workers from misuse of production quotas, state officials announced Tuesday.

The \$5.9 million in penalties, which were issued last month, stem from demands that the behemoth e-commerce company placed on thousands of workers at two of its Inland Empire fulfillment centers. The California Labor Commissioner's Office found that managers at the facilities failed to provide employees with adequate explanations of quotas that they were expected to meet as they prepared orders for shipment.

Mindy Acevedo, staff attorney with the Warehouse Worker Resource Center, an [advocacy group](#), said in a statement that "these citations show Amazon failed to follow fundamental parts of the law."

The law, AB 701, went into effect at the beginning of 2022 and requires that companies explain in writing the speed at which warehouse workers are expected to complete a certain amount of work as well as the discipline the company may impose for failure to meet the quotas. Under the law, an employee cannot be required to meet a quota that prevents them from taking meal or bathroom breaks and rest periods.

Amazon spokesperson Maureen Lynch Vogel said in an email that the company plans to defend itself against the citations.

"We disagree with the allegations made in the citations and have appealed. The truth is, we don't have fixed quotas. At Amazon, individual performance is evaluated over a long period of time, in relation to how the entire site's team is performing," Vogel said.

"Employees can—and are encouraged to—review their performance whenever they wish. They can always talk to a manager if they're having trouble finding the information."

The citations include penalties of more than \$1.2 million at a warehouse in Redlands and nearly \$4.7 million at one in Moreno Valley.

The fines imposed on Amazon are among the first issued by the Labor Commissioner's Office for failing to provide written quota descriptions to its workers. Since September 2023, the office has handed down \$7.8 million in penalties—a total that includes the Amazon fines, according to the Warehouse Worker Resource Center.

The enforcement comes after years of scrutiny over working conditions inside Amazon's warehouses, including investigations by state and federal agencies into the company's safety practices. They also come as California has come under fire for failing to enforce labor laws around wage theft and other violations.

Lilia Garcia-Brower, the California Labor Commissioner, said Tuesday at a news conference in Ontario that Amazon had not been singled out for enforcement. Her office, she said, sent out hundreds of letters notifying companies of possible violations and followed up with inspections on companies that failed to respond or comply.

"We are not playing the game of gotcha here," Garcia-Brower said.

Garcia-Brower said her office will defend the Amazon citation at an appeal hearing. She encouraged workers to reach out to [worker](#) centers and other community organizations for help.

"It is so important for workers to come together, understand it is the bad-faith employer who wants you to feel isolated and alone and unfamiliar with your rights."

At the news conference, Veronica Kern, who has worked at Amazon for seven years, and currently sorts products and loads them onto conveyor belts at the Moreno Valley warehouse, said it "can be a stressful and intense place," with managers publicly chastising workers when they decide they aren't working fast enough.

She described her manager telling her she needed to work faster and that she was performing in the bottom 5% of workers. He would stand outside the bathroom and get workers to hurry back to work, she said.

"They started treating us like a number rather than humans," Kern said.

Kern recalled how managers would show workers real-time productivity data that they said showed them falling short of production targets, but often would not tell workers what those targets were, she said.

2024 Los Angeles Times. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Amazon fined nearly \$6 million for violations at Inland Empire warehouses (2024, June 19) retrieved 27 June 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2024-06-amazon-fined-million-violations-inland.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.