

Workers to protest conditions at Amazon, Instacart and other retailers Friday

30 April 2020, by Jefferson Graham



Workers are uniting and striking May 1, International Worker's Day, to protest working conditions at Amazon, Instacart, Shipt, Whole Foods, Walmart, Target and FedEx.

Organizers say they are striking due to their employers "continuing failure to provide adequate protection in the workplace."

A coalition of workers at food store Trader Joe's, which isn't unionized, tweeted Tuesday, asking customers not to cross picket lines at the affected stores and boycott the protested companies. "Stand in solidarity with workers unable to strike at this time."

Most of the attention for the strike has been directed towards Amazon, where at least one warehouse worker has died from COVID-19 and several others have been infected.

The company has seen several walkouts and protests. Two employees who protested worker conditions publicly were fired by Amazon.

In response to the upcoming protest, Amazon said in a statement: "While we respect people's right to express themselves, we object to the irresponsible actions of labor groups in spreading misinformation and making false claims about Amazon during this

unprecedented health and economic crisis. We have gone to extreme measures to understand and address this pandemic."

Amazon adds that it spent more than \$800 million in the first half of 2020 on COVID-19 safety measures such as masks, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, gloves and installing additional hand-washing stations at warehouses.

Protesters aren't the only ones publicly criticizing Amazon. The e-retailer provided "inadequate" protections to warehouse workers in New York, per the New York state attorney general.

"Amazon's health and [safety measures](#) taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are so inadequate that they may violate several provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act," per a letter to Amazon from New York state lawyer Letitia James, according to NPR.

For its part, Walmart said that [worker](#) safety is a priority. "This is why we're conducting health screens and daily temperature checks and providing masks and gloves to all associates," Walmart spokesperson Jami Lamontagne said in an email.

Instacart, which pays people to grocery shop and deliver to customers, said its team "has been diligently working to offer new policies, guidelines, product features, resources, increased bonuses, and [personal protective equipment](#) to ensure the health and safety of shoppers during this critical time."

Target, which owns Shipt, also defended its policies, saying the protesters are but a "very small minority" of the workforce. "The vast majority of our more than 340,000 front-line team members have expressed pride in the role they are playing in helping provide for families across the country during this time of need."

Interestingly, FedEx said it didn't expect any of its drivers to take part in the protest. "This effort seems almost entirely focused on other companies within the service and retail industries," said spokesperson Jim Masilak.

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