

# Amazon delivery drivers scoff at company's claim that its workers don't pee in bottles

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Amazon sparked a firestorm of derision when it pushed back on social media against claims that workers urinate in bottles because they are pressured to skip restroom breaks to keep up with the company's productivity goals.

The kerfuffle began Wednesday when Amazon's official news account on Twitter jumped to the defense of the company's retail chief, Dave Clark, who had been taking fire for saying Amazon's \$15 [minimum wage](#) made it the "Bernie Sanders of employers."

"Paying workers \$15/hr doesn't make you a 'progressive workplace' when you union-bust & make workers urinate in [water bottles](#)," U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., tweeted back.

"You don't really believe the peeing in bottles thing, do you?" Amazon's official Twitter account replied. "If that were true, nobody would work for us."

On [social media](#) and in interviews, [drivers](#) delivering Amazon packages said the company's claim was out of touch with their reality. In lawsuits,

books and media reports, drivers have repeatedly said that they resort to urinating in bottles, bushes and coffee cups because the number of packages they need to deliver, or else risk termination, leaves them no time to find a restroom.

"I bought a Shewee and peed in bottles," former Everett driver Sosha Kjolso said in an interview, referring to the funnel-like female urinating device. On exceptionally busy days, she said, "I've peed my pants at work."

Drivers are regularly expected to deliver up to 300 packages in a 10-hour shift, a regime that a 2017 class-action lawsuit against Amazon said left drivers in Washington state little time to take legally mandated breaks. Amazon and delivery service contractors recently settled that suit for \$8.2 million.

"The lack of rest and meal breaks was part of the culture for Amazon delivery drivers," said Seattle driver Henry Abreu in the lawsuit. "It was just the way it was. Amazon assigned us a certain number of packages that we were required to deliver in the time allotted by Amazon and according to Amazon's instructions.

"If we did not finish within the allotted time," he said, "Amazon would issue negative marks against us." Abreu, who delivered for Amazon between 2015 and 2016, said he urinated in a [bottle](#) he kept in the van during delivery shifts because he didn't have enough time to use the restroom.

Reports of drivers delivering for Amazon, and of its warehouse workers, urinating in bottles have been featured in The Guardian and Business Insider, as well as in journalist James Bloodworth's 2018 book "Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low-Wage Britain."

One of Amazon's defenses against those claims was that the company does not directly employ many of the drivers delivering Amazon packages.

Though they wear Amazon uniforms and drive trucks with its branding, most of the U.S. drivers delivering Amazon orders likely work for one of the nearly 2,000 third-party delivery services Amazon has contracted to get its packages to customers' doorsteps. All told, more than 400,000 contract or self-employed drivers deliver goods for Amazon.

Attorneys for plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit argued that the commerce giant nevertheless sets the terms of drivers' employment.

"It's a pretty shell game that Amazon has going," former driver Mark Eddy, who was based out of Amazon's Everett warehouse, said in an interview. "Amazon had final say on hire and fire. Amazon set our metrics. Amazon set our routes. At one point, Amazon was loading our vans for us. But we were told over and over again that we were not Amazon employees."

Eddy said he did not urinate in bottles, though he knows drivers who did. But he was expected to deliver so many packages during his shift that he said he often lacked the time to visit the restroom and peed in bushes along his route.

His first day on the job, a driver told him always to stop in unlocked port-a-pottys at construction sites, "because if you don't use that, you'll never make it." In "really urgent" situations, he said other drivers advised him to open the door and stand on the running board to let urine trickle out of the van. "They'll think you have a coolant leak."

Eddy and Kjolso rattled off locations known to be prime pee spots, including a wooded patch near a bend in the Snohomish River and a cul-de-sac in Marysville.

In social media groups for Amazon warehouse workers and delivery drivers Thursday, workers shared stories of when they were forced to pee in a bottle.

"We should all tweet pictures of our piss bottles to Amazon," one wrote.

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