

Why Thousands Of Amazon Workers Are Striking On Prime Day

Amazon workers in Minnesota and other places around the world walked off the job to protest what they've decried as odious and unsafe working conditions.

5 Midway through the work day on Monday, the first day of Amazon's Prime Day sale extravaganza, workers at the company's distribution center in Shakopee, Minnesota, walked off the job in protest of what they've described as unreasonable and unsafe working conditions. It was reportedly the first major strike of Amazon workers in the U.S. during Prime Day, one of the company's biggest sales events of the year.

10 "We know Prime Day is a big day for Amazon, so we hope this strike will help executives understand how serious we are about wanting real change that will uplift the workers in Amazon's warehouses," Safiyo Mohamed, one of the Minnesota strikers, said in a statement. "We create a lot of wealth for Amazon, but they aren't treating us with the respect and dignity that we deserve."

15 Photos taken outside the Shakopee warehouse show a few dozen protesters holding signs with phrases like "We're human, not robots." Some 100 to 200 workers had been expected to join the strike, which lasted six hours starting at 3 p.m. on Monday; but strikers claimed managers had intimidated workers from joining the walkout.

The Minnesota workers weren't the only ones to use Prime Day as a way to make their grievances¹ with Amazon known. Some 2,000 Amazon workers at seven facilities in Germany walked out in protest of poor working conditions and low wages.

20 Amazon has repeatedly come under scrutiny over the years for subjecting warehouse workers to punishing working conditions, including instituting unreasonable quotas and making it difficult for employees to take adequate breaks or use the restroom.

25 Meg Brady, a "rebiner"² at the warehouse, told The Washington Post this week that she's expected to handle 600 items per hour — a physically demanding task that she said caused a stress fracture in her foot.

Amazon has pushed back against the strikers and their supporters, claiming they were "conjuring misinformation to work in their favor."

30 "[In] fact we already offer the things they purport³ to be their cause — industry leading pay of \$15 per hour, benefits, and a safe workplace for our employees," the company said in an earlier statement.

By Dominique Mosbergen, adapted from *The Huffington Post*, July 16th, 2019

(370 words)

¹ a grievance: a complaint

² a rebinner: a position at amazon

³ to purport: to claim