

Unsafe Acts Fatality File



Go back to work': outcry over deaths on Amazon's warehouse floor

In September, Billy Foister, a 48-year-old Amazon warehouse worker, died after a heart attack at work. According to his brother, an Amazon human resources representative informed him at the hospital that Billy had lain on the floor for 20 minutes before receiving treatment from Amazon's internal safety responders.

Amazon said it had responded to Foister's collapse "within minutes".

An Amazon worker on the same shift told the Guardian: "Bill was on the floor for quite some time and nobody knew that time until cameras were reviewed, but in 20 minutes a worker in a nearby department saw him lying on the floor and then began radio callouts for 911. It really is unbelievable how Bill was laying there for 20 minutes and nobody nearby saw until an Amnesty worker with a radio came by."

The incident is among the latest in a series of accidents and fatalities that have led to Amazon's inclusion on the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health's 2019 Dirty Dozen list of the most dangerous employers in the United States.

Foister, a stower who scanned and stocked warehouse shelves with products at an Amazon warehouse in Etna, Ohio, just outside of Columbus, went into cardiac arrest on 2 September 2019.

On the 911 call recording, obtained by the Guardian, the operator directed an Amazon employee through finding and using an automated external defibrillator (AED) on Foister, who was unresponsive to CPR.

"After the incident, everyone was forced to go back to work. No time to decompress. Basically watch a man pass away and then get told to go back to work, everyone, and act like it's fine,".

Billy Foister was taken to a hospital, where Edward was immediately told that his brother had passed away after efforts to revive him were unsuccessful.

Edward noted that a week earlier, his brother had gone to the warehouse's AmCare clinic and reported headaches and chest pains. According to Foister, his brother had his blood pressure taken and was told he was dehydrated, given two beverages to drink, and sent back to work.

"There was no reason for my brother to have died. He went to AmCare complaining about chest pains. He should have been sent to the hospital, not just sent back to work just to put things like toothpaste in a bin so somebody can get it in an hour," Edward said. "It seems Amazon values money way more than life. If they did their job right, I wouldn't have had to bury my little brother."

Amazon denied that Billy Foister died at the warehouse and said he was treated "within minutes".