

# AMZN

## Working conditions

### **Amazon A–Z: Safety**

**Amazon prides itself on its safety standards. Managers on stand-ups (meetings at the beginning and in the middle of each shift) remind employees of “safety tips”. One can be warned not only for running around the warehouse, but also for failing to hold onto the stair railing.**

In practice, however, the rules are there to be broken. This is one of the most important theses of the Center for Investigative Reporting paper, prepared on the basis of internal accident lists in Amazon and interviews with its employees. In order to meet the high standards of productivity, safety rules must be bent.

“They would jump or stretch to reach a top rack instead of using a stepladder. They would twist and bend over to grab boxes instead of taking time to squat and lift with their legs. They would hoist extra-heavy items alone to avoid wasting time getting help. They had to, they said, or they would lose their jobs. So they took the risk,” reads the article. Data from 23 of the company’s fulfillment centers in the US indicate that in 2018 the rate of accidents per 100 employees was 9.6, while the industry average was 4.

“As unionists, we know that in 2018 there were 356 accidents per year in the [Polish] Amazon. Almost one per day!” – adds Agnieszka Mróz from OZZ IP trade union in an interview for “Strajk.pl” portal. “Fact, there is rather no risk of a fatal accident here, the vast majority is classified as light injuries. Nevertheless, they are difficult to heal – injuries to joints, wrists, tendons”. “They report bleeding foot wounds, ulcers. I can almost faultlessly recognize who comes from Amazon by looking at their feet,” says a general practitioner from Poznań, cited by “Gazeta Wyborcza” newspaper. This, in turn, is the effect of walking up to 20 kilometres a day at work.

In newer warehouses, part of the process is handled by robots, eliminating the need to walk between alleys with products. However, automation increases the pace of work and the repetitiveness of human workers’ movements, which may increase the frequency of injuries mentioned earlier by Mróz. This seems to be confirmed by data from the USA. According to the Center for Investigative Reporting, among the warehouses with

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the highest number of accidents, the robotized ones dominate. An extreme case is the situation in the fulfillment center in Tracy, California, where after the introduction of the Amazon Robotics system, the accident rate has increased from 2.9 per 100 employees in 2015 to 11.3 in 2018.

## **sources:**

1. Adriana Rozwadowska, *Pracownika Amazona poznasz po chorych stopach. W Polsce bunt w magazynach, w Niemczech i Hiszpanii - protesty*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 2018 <https://wyborcza.pl/7,155287,23687189,pracownika-amazona-poznasz-po-stopach-bunt-w-magazynie-w-polsce.html>
2. Will Evans, *Behind the Smile. Amazon's internal injury records expose the true toll of its relentless drive for speed*, "Reveal News", 2019 <https://www.revealnews.org/article/behind-the-smiles/>
3. Małgorzata Kulbaczewska-Figat, *Już nie boimy się walczyć o godność [rozmowa z pracownikami Amazon]*, "Strajk.pl", 2019 <https://strajk.eu/juz-nie-boimy-sie-walczyc-o-godnosc-rozmowa-z-pracownikami-amazon/>