

French court orders Amazon to limit warehouse activities to essentials until worker protection assured



Paris, April 15 (RHC)-- Amazon's French warehouses have been restricted to shipping essential goods only until a safety assessment can be conducted, after unions demanded the megacorporation adopt better employee protection measures.

The judicial court of Nanterre has ordered Amazon to limit its warehouse activities to "reception, preparation and shipment of food products, hygienic products, and medical products" within 24 hours, union counsel Judith Krivine told reporters on Tuesday. The company must submit to a professional risk assessment in conjunction with employee representatives before it can resume normal operations.

If the e-commerce behemoth violates the order, it could be slapped with a penalty of ?1 million (\$1.1 million) per day of delay, or per violation. The Union Syndicale Solidaires, representing Amazon warehouse workers, took Amazon to court last week after their demands for better employee protection

allegedly went unheeded.

Amazon, for its part, insists that it has taken all necessary precautions -- temperature checks are in place at all warehouse entrances, markings on the floor show safe social distance, and masks and hand sanitizer are provided to workers. But the retailer's promises to limit its shipping activity to essential items only have not been followed, according to union representatives. An inspection by labor authorities earlier this month resulted in five formal notices.

Warehouse employees in the U.S. have had less success in calling for more stringent safety measures from Amazon. A walkout at a Staten Island facility last month succeeded in garnering international media attention, but led to its leader being fired, supposedly for violating the same social distancing rules he was calling for the warehouse to institute.

A leaked internal memo later revealed Amazon's leadership had focused on smearing the protest leader in order to draw attention away from the protesting employees' demands.

American Amazon employees also took issue with non-essential items being shipped from warehouses. A widely circulated clip from Detroit network WXYZ showed a striking worker complaining about the continued availability of sex toys on the site.

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