For Amazon’s management, profits and share prices are of top priority. The health of their employees however is not very high on the list.

In dispatch centers, all hell has broken loose. That is the case in Germany and all over the world. Employees are already working at maximum capacity as turnover rates have spiked due to the corona crisis. Coercion to dispatch goods even faster is already foreseeable. This needs to stop, demands ver.di.

Permanent contracts for fixed-term employees!

In this unique, hazardous situation, it is of special importance to avoid and actively tackle increased stress and strain on the health of personnel. Lightening the staff’s load – i.a. through transforming the numerous fixed-term employments into permanent contracts – is not a luxury, it is a necessity and part of taking preventive measures against spreading of the coronavirus. Also at Amazon!

More consideration for the health of Amazon employees is absolutely pressing, due to the lack thereof on the part of the employer.

There are still reports from several sites concerning insufficient precautions against infection. Furthermore, the risky way of handling the salary increase of two Euros per hour, limited for now until the end of April, calls for loud criticism: In some dispatch centers, this money is paid only as an attendance bonus. Especially now, the consequences can be fatal, as it encourages sick employees to try and make it to work.

Employer provokes risks – that needs to stop!

Willingly provoking additional health risks in this manner constitutes extremely irresponsible behavior on behalf of the employer, which needs to change. Additionally, it underlines the importance of trade union goals of the ver.di members at Amazon. In a nutshell: A general salary increase as well as better health protection, both aspects securely protected by a collective agreement.

Right now, we need measures that can be implemented quickly. That also comprises simple processes for fathers or mothers, who are neither eligible for emergency childcare programs nor have any other alternative. If a member of the workforce is affected by this emergency situation, they should receive continued salary payments while on leave of absence.

On site, hygiene measures need to be extended, because they are the basis for important protection.

In order to be protected against smear infection, employees need to be briefed on washing and caring for their hands thoroughly at least once within the hour.
The employer needs to provide additional hand disinfectant as well as single-use gloves that meet at least the criterion of ‘limited virucidal activity’, hence are effective against viruses.

Doorknobs and other precarious surfaces such as shared work equipment need to be cleaned regularly.

All employees need to be instructed regarding ‘correct sneezing and coughing’: Turn away from others, use a single-use tissue or the crook of your arm.

External visitors or service providers need to be informed on hygiene measures (offering disinfectant and single-use gloves).

Viruses are mainly transmitted through sneezing, coughing or loud talking. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the lowest possible noise level in the work environment and maintain a safety distance of 1,5 to 2 meters between employees.

Every member of staff needs to be informed regarding the increased risks, if one of the following factors occur: pre-existing conditions (e.g. flu, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, cancer or organ illness), weakened immune system due to medication, illness or particular strain, age of over 50 years.

Regarding employees affected by a higher risk, the employer needs to offer for example a change of workplace towards an activity area that requires less contact to suppliers or other external factors.

The works council and executives need to be included with a focus on contributing to the process of these temporary workplace changes.

People who feel respected and who are subject to care and consideration are more resilient in the face of health risks.

Employees need to be made aware without a doubt, that their health matters to their employer and they need to be informed extensively on the preventive measures that are initiated.

The employees and the works council need to be involved in the implementation of measures and kept in the loop regarding the change of procedures etc. That is a signal of appreciation and considerate action.

Staff needs the possibility to drink non-alcoholic beverages directly at the workplace or very closeby, in order to avoid dehydration of mucous membranes.

A company culture of short breaks needs to be promoted. Any immune system reacts in a beneficial way when allowed a short break in the fresh air (vitamin D) or in a well ventilated and light-flooded room.

It cannot be allowed for remaining personnel to cover the total workload in times of possibly increasing sickness report numbers. That is far too risky.

In cooperation with the works council and the employees, procedures for a higher level of sick leaves need to be arranged. It is necessary to define urgency levels for different tasks and to prepare an emergency plan.

The best protection against viruses is a strong immune system. What possibilities are there?

An increase of workload needs to be avoided. Staff planning and scheduling needs to be adapted instead. Ending the fixed-term nature of colleagues’ work contracts is an essential part of that.