

# **Amazon Spokesperson Issues Statement About Lawsuit Filed After Fatal Warehouse Tornado**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Amazon's Official Spokesperson Kelly Nantel issued the following statement after the lawsuit was filed by Clifford Law Offices on Monday, January 17, 2022, on behalf of the family of a 26-year-old delivery driver - Austin McEwen, who was killed after he was working at an Amazon distribution center in Edwardsville, Illinois when a tornado struck the facility on December 10, 2021.

Nantel said the following: "This lawsuit misunderstands key facts, such as the difference between various types of severe weather and tornado alerts, as well as the condition and safety of the building. The truth is that this was a new building less than four years old, built in compliance with all applicable building codes, and the local teams were following the weather conditions closely.

"Severe weather watches are common in this part of the country and, while precautions are taken, are not cause for most businesses to close down. We believe our team did the right thing as soon as a warning was issued, and they worked to move people to safety as quickly as possible.

"We will defend against this lawsuit, but our focus continues to be on supporting our employees and partners, the families who lost loved ones, the surrounding community, and all those affected by the tornadoes."

Jack J. Casciato, a partner at Clifford Law Offices who represents the family of the young 26-year-old driver, said this in a statement on Monday: "Initial investigation reveals that workers at the facility, including McEwen, were required to continue working instead of being told to evacuate when it was known of the possibility of a major tornado. In addition, initial investigation reveals that the Amazon facility had no basement shelter despite this area of Illinois is prone to tornadoes, and no safety plan or adequate emergency plan is required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

"Further, reports indicate that Amazon directed McEwen and five others that were killed to shelter in a bathroom when Amazon knew or should have known that this location would not protect them. It is believed this is the first lawsuit filed against Amazon for this tragically avoidable incident."

The six victims in the Amazon warehouse collapse after the tornado on December 10, 2021, included four people from Illinois: McEwen, of Edwardsville; Clayton Lynn Cope, 29, of Alton; Larry Virden, 46, of Collinsville and Kevin Dickey, 62, of Carlyle. The two other victims were: Deandre S. Morrow, 28, and Etheria Hebb, 34, were from St. Louis.