

'2,000 People, 900 Parking Spaces': Amazon's Return-to-Office Mandate Has Hit a Snag – Not Enough Desks or Parking



Amazon issued a return-to-office (RTO) mandate in September calling its corporate employees back to the office by January 2. Over a month has passed since the mandate, and some Amazon employees have yet to see the office – because Amazon can't find enough desks to hold its 350,000-person workforce.

According to a Thursday report from The Wall Street Journal, Amazon has postponed RTO for staff assigned to dozens of U.S. offices, including New York City, Houston, and Atlanta, due to a lack of space. Amazon employees assigned to some locations are still working remotely as they wait for further instructions about when they should be in the office full-

time.

The San Francisco Bay Area is especially short on space. Amazon has 18 offices in the region, but it lacks desks for at least 800 employees. In response last month, an internal group submitted a proposal to Amazon's facilities division asking for a new office to open in the area. According to the WSJ report, a spreadsheet supporting the proposal has drawn signatures from close to 600 Amazon employees.

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An Amazon spokesperson told the WSJ in an email that "the overwhelming majority" of corporate employees have desks and that only "a relatively small number" of Amazon's "hundreds of offices" are "not quite ready" for fully in-person work.

Even in offices with desk space, there have been logistics issues with the RT0 mandate, such as where employees should park. Jeff Ferris, principal technologist at Amazon Web Services Cloud, posted on X last month that when he tried to park his car in the office garage, he was turned away by security.

"2,000 people, 900 parking spaces," he wrote.

Haha, showed up for #RT0 (er, return to office, not the usual Recovery Time Objective in my life of work) and got turned away by security at the garage. "2000 people, 900 parking spaces," she said. ???

– Jeff Ferris (@trackzero) January 7, 2025

Some Amazon employees who are back in the office report not having teammates who work from the same location, challenging the objectives of in-person work.

When Amazon CEO Andy Jassy first announced the RT0 policy in

September, he stated that it would be “easier for our teammates to learn, model, practice, and strengthen our culture; collaborating, brainstorming, and inventing [is] simpler and more effective; teaching and learning from one another are more seamless; and, teams tend to be better connected to one another.”

He reiterated the message at a leaked all-hands meeting in November, telling employees that the RTO mandate was about “strengthening our culture” and fostering collaboration.

Amazon employees have been working in-person at least 3 days per week since May 2023. Other companies with five-day in-office policies include Salesforce and Walmart. Amazon laid off dozens of employees in its communications and sustainability departments last month.

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