

Amazon secretly slowed deliveries, deceived anyone who complained, lawsuit says

In a statement to Ars, Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said that claims that Amazon's "business practices are somehow discriminatory or deceptive" are "categorically false."

Nantel said that Amazon started using third-party services to deliver to these areas to "put the safety of delivery drivers first."

"In the ZIP codes in question, there have been specific and targeted acts against drivers delivering Amazon packages," Nantel said. "We made the deliberate choice to adjust our operations, including delivery routes and times, for the sole reason of protecting the safety of drivers."

Nantel also pushed back on claims that Amazon concealed this choice, claiming that the company is "always transparent with customers during the shopping journey and checkout process about when, exactly, they can expect their orders to arrive."

But that doesn't really gel with Schwalb's finding that even customers using Amazon's support chat were allegedly misled. During one chat, a frustrated user pointing out discrepancies between DC ZIP codes asked if Amazon "is a waste of money in my zip code?" Instead of confirming that the ZIP code was excluded from in-house delivery services, the support team member seemingly unhelpfully suggested the user delete and re-add their address to their account.

"Amazon has doubled down on its deception by refusing to

disclose the fact of the delivery exclusion, and instead has deceptively implied that slower speeds are simply due to other circumstances, rather than an affirmative decision by Amazon," Schwalb's complaint said.

Schwalb takes no issue with Amazon diverting delivery drivers from perceived high-crime areas but insists that Amazon owes its subscribers in those regions an explanation for delivery delays and perhaps even cheaper subscription prices. He has asked for an injunction on Amazon's allegedly deceptive advertising urging users to pay for fast shipments they rarely, if ever, receive. He also wants Amazon to refund subscribers seemingly cheated out of full subscription benefits and has asked a jury to award civil damages to deter future unfair business practices. Amazon could owe millions in a loss, with each delivery to almost 50,000 users since mid-2022 considered a potential violation.

Nantel said that Amazon has offered to "work together" with Schwalb's office "to reduce crime and improve safety in these areas" but did not suggest Amazon would be changing how it advertises Prime delivery in the US. Instead, the e-commerce giant plans to fight the claims and prove that "providing fast and accurate delivery times and prioritizing the safety of customers and delivery partners are not mutually exclusive," Nantel said.

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2024/12/amazon-secretly-slowed-deliveries-deceived-anyone-who-complained-lawsuit-says/>