



LEOH Trip

Amazon Fulfillment Center

July 20 and 27, 2026



This Amazon Fulfillment Center, opened 9 years ago, is located in Houston at 5615 W. Fuqua. A map search will tell you there are a total of 12 such centers located in and around Houston.

Upon checking in, Amazon lanyards with ID tags were distributed, and personal items, such as purses, were secured onsite in a locker during the tour.

We were also reminded that photos were strictly forbidden during the tour.

Following brief instructions on how to use the headphones for hearing as well as for asking questions, we embarked on our approximately 90-minute walking tour with guide Rochelle.



The Creation of Amazon

Amazon began in the garage of founder and recent Princeton graduate Jeff Bezos in Bellevue, Washington, in the summer of 1994. First calling his online bookselling business *Cadabra*, as in *abracadabra*, he soon realized the name sounded too much like *cadaver* and changed it to *Amazon*. Within two years, the business became a success, selling to all 50 states and 45 countries.



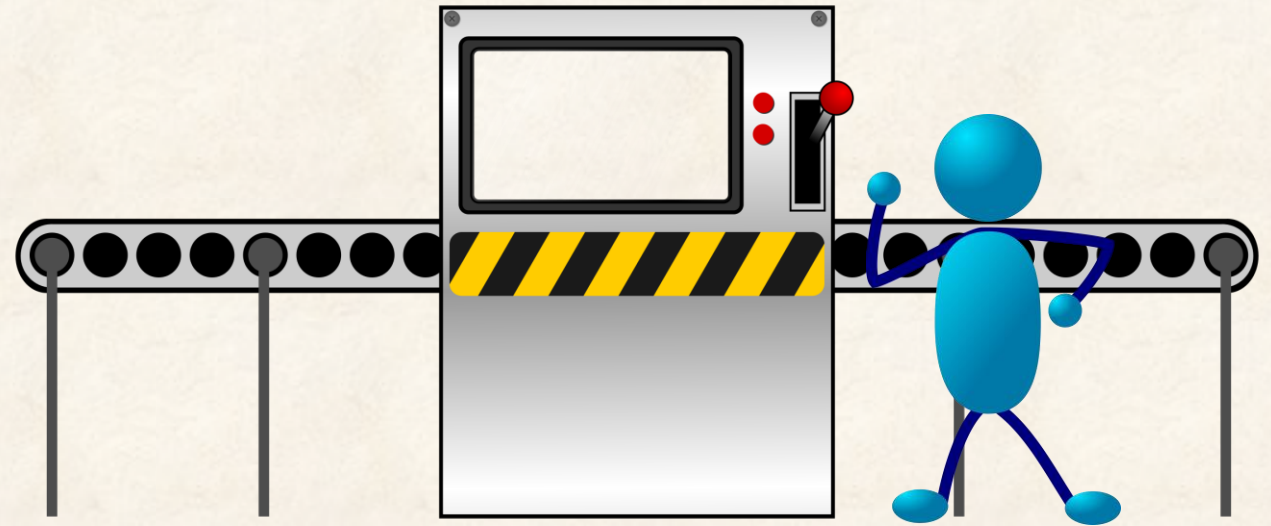
By 1998, the commitment to innovation plus a variety of items being offered helped Amazon become a huge success. *Covid* aided in customer growth since items could be received at home rather than risk exposure while out shopping. Constant innovations and expansion of services offered have ensured continued success for Amazon.

We were immediately in awe of the building's vastness and multitude of factory-type machinery processes. The building itself is 9 years old and contains 2.3 million square feet, equivalent to 30 football fields. We began our tour on the ground level, where we followed our guide on designated paths to each station. Staying within yellow-taped floor markings and using hand railing in certain areas and on stairs helped ensure our safety.



WHAT YOU DO *NOT* SEE AT AMAZON

Most workstation tasks utilize automation in such a way that challenging physical manual labor by staff is kept to a minimum.



WHAT YOU *DO* SEE AT AMAZON

Automated processes such as conveyor belts and robotic devices perform many of the tasks that would normally require more human labor.

The Amazon Fulfillment Center process from start to finish is described in 8 steps.

INBOUND DOCK

RECEIVE

STOW

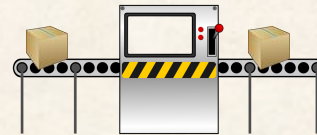
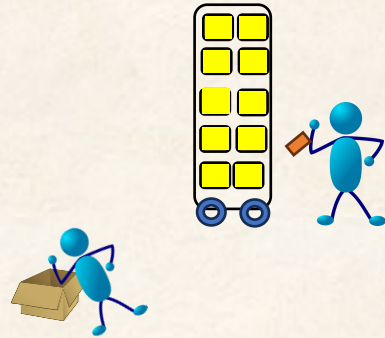
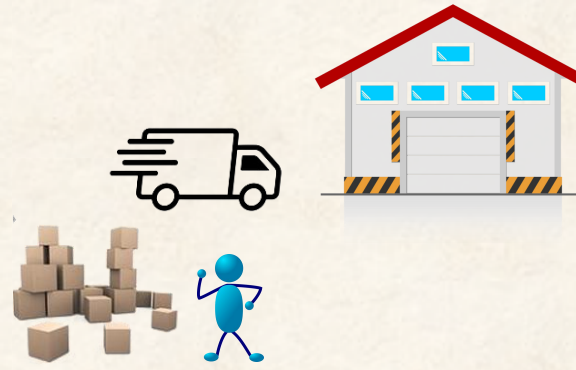
PICK

PACK

SLAM

SHIP

DELIVER



INBOUND DOCK



- Items arrive at the Fulfillment Center from manufacturers and sellers for storage
- Over 50% of items found on the Amazon website come from small and medium sized businesses

RECEIVE



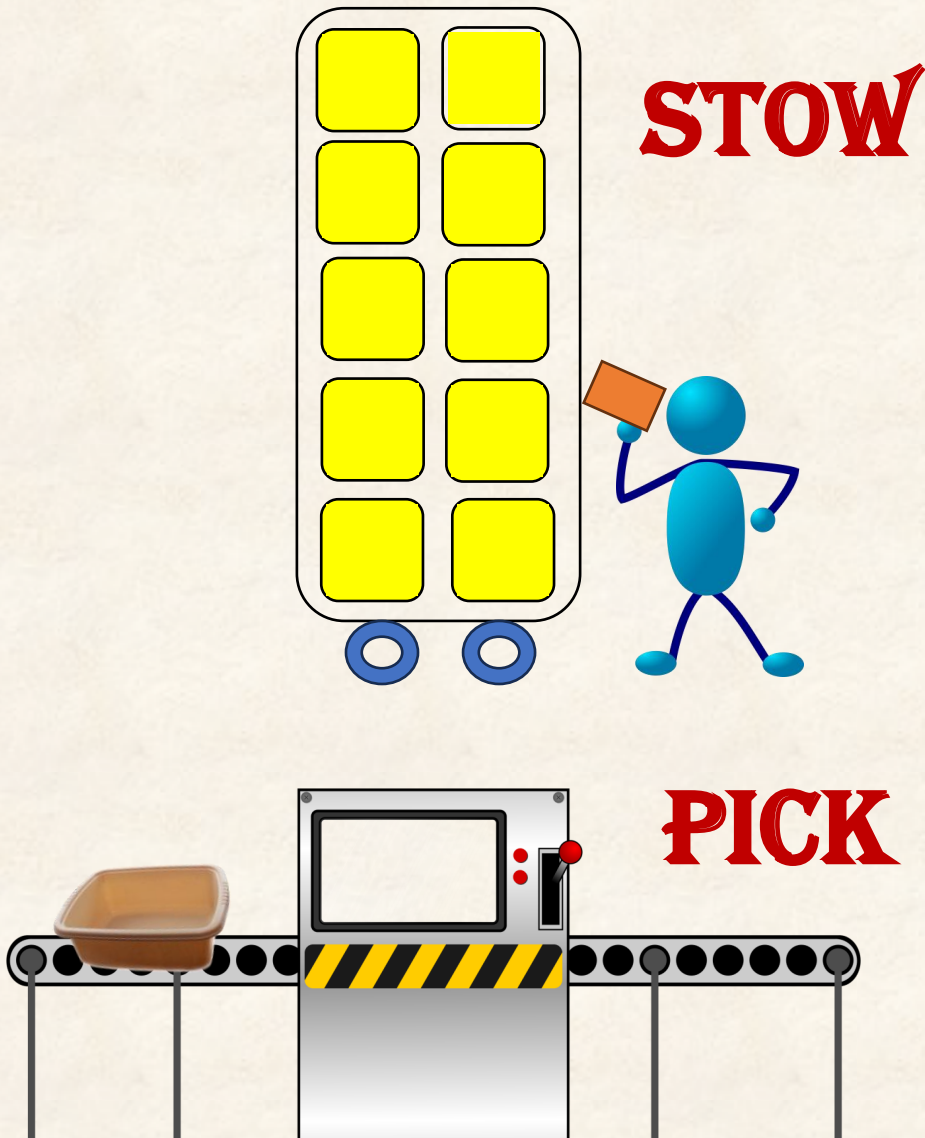
- Quality control checks for accuracy of item description and any item damage are performed before the items are deemed acceptable for stocking

We learned that **HERCULES** at Amazon is just as fantastical as the mythical strongman

As items are delivered to the facility for storage, the next step is to catalog and stow them until customers order items. Employees scan each item and place them in a bin. Once a bin fills up with random items, the employee then slides it into a slot within *Hercules*, a 4-sided robotic storage receptacle about 7 feet tall. *Hercules* rolls itself around in a contained space and is its own inventory catalog of every item in its numerous storage bins, until it is time to retrieve a specific item to fill a customer's order.

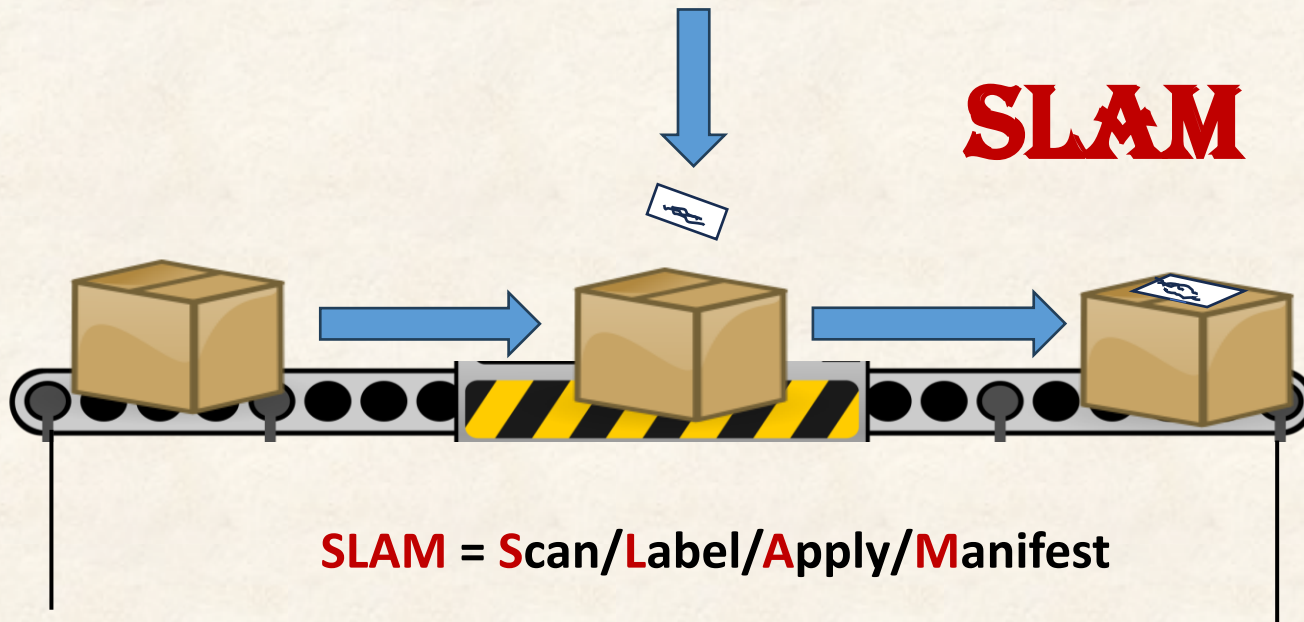
There are many *Hercules* units in a contained space, with each capable of multi-directional moving at up to 3 miles/hour. When a customer orders one of the items *Hercules* is storing, *Hercules* will roll to a workstation for the item to be "picked" by staff. The specific storage bin holding the desired item lights up – yet another feature to facilitate speed and efficiency.

Open plastic containers (totes) await the various items pulled by staff. These items then move on to the next station for further sorting. Large/bulky items require additional steps to catalog, store, and process.





Items in the plastic totes move along the conveyor belt to the **PACKING** station, where appropriate size Amazon packing boxes or envelopes (size and type determined by computer) await. Here the employee scans the customer information, transfers the items to the box, adds packing material to the box or package as needed, tapes it shut with just the right amount of tape as determined by computer, adds a label generated by computer with barcode information, and sends it on its continuing journey via conveyor belt.



The taped/sealed boxes and packages with identifying information continue on the conveyor belt to a **SLAM** station. As they move along the belt, they are scanned for information and at the appropriate point on the belt a burst of air sends the preprinted customer address label down to drop directly onto each package/box (this part was magical)!



SHIP



On occasion a package label attached at the SLAM station may be crinkled or otherwise challenging to read. Human intervention at this point allows for a label to be reprinted and manually placed on the box/mailer.

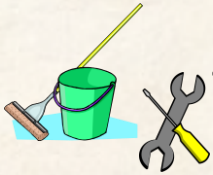
Boxes leaving the SLAM stations continue via conveyor belt, where movable programmed devices on the belt route items by geographic delivery zones using air bursts to “bump” the items down specific chutes. Employees then load them into Amazon trucks corresponding to these chutes. Trucks then transport items to Sortation or Delivery stations to ensure efficient delivery of items to stops along driver routes.



DELIVER

Delivery associates in Amazon trucks or Flex drivers in their personal cars complete the Amazon magic when the item or items are delivered directly to the customer address (or to a lockbox designation within a participating business of the customer’s choosing, near their office or residence).

Some interesting things we learned or observed during the tour include the following:



- Operations in the fulfillment facility do not run 24/7; early each morning everything stops for about 2 hours for cleaning and maintenance.
- On their busiest days, they can process around a million packages.
- During the holiday season, they hire additional workers to handle the volume.
- A cafeteria is onsite for employee convenience.
- Employees observed at the workstations during the tour worked extremely quickly and efficiently
- Employees stand, rather than sit, as they work, and take breaks as needed. Breaks can include a stretching station with specific stretches recommended.
- Employees receive competitive salaries and benefits, including medical.
- Conveyor belts are visually checked throughout the day for any packages that may have slipped off the belt and lodged beside it. Belts include some at eye level or lower, while others operate much higher.

NOTES

- A variety of websites are available to learn more about Amazon, its fulfillment centers, and to view videos of fulfillment center activities. Employee expectations are also stated, as well as steps taken to ensure employee safety.
- The highly computerized process of tracking items also extends to employees at their work stations. Speed and efficiency of staff are easily tracked via their computerized transactions.

The Amazon Story – continued

The year 2003 was the first profitable year for Amazon.

The Amazon subscription price soon included *Amazon Prime Video*. Projected membership for the end of 2025 was 168 million subscribers (think worldwide).

As online shopping continued increasing in popularity, Amazon's successes and innovations increased as well.



What's next for Amazon? A primary focus is on Amazon product delivery.

Drones are being tested for feasibility in California as *Amazon Air*.

Amazon has also partnered with companies such as Kohl's and Best Buy.

A key aspect of this partnership is ensuring delivery and storage of items for customers at their nearby stores. Customers can pick up their item at their convenience in a secure place within the store, with the threat of "porch pirates" eliminated. Customers can also return items conveniently through these businesses.



More recently, a partnership with GrubHub expects Amazon to expand further into customer food delivery.

Amazon also recently purchased MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) studios to grow their TV and movie business.



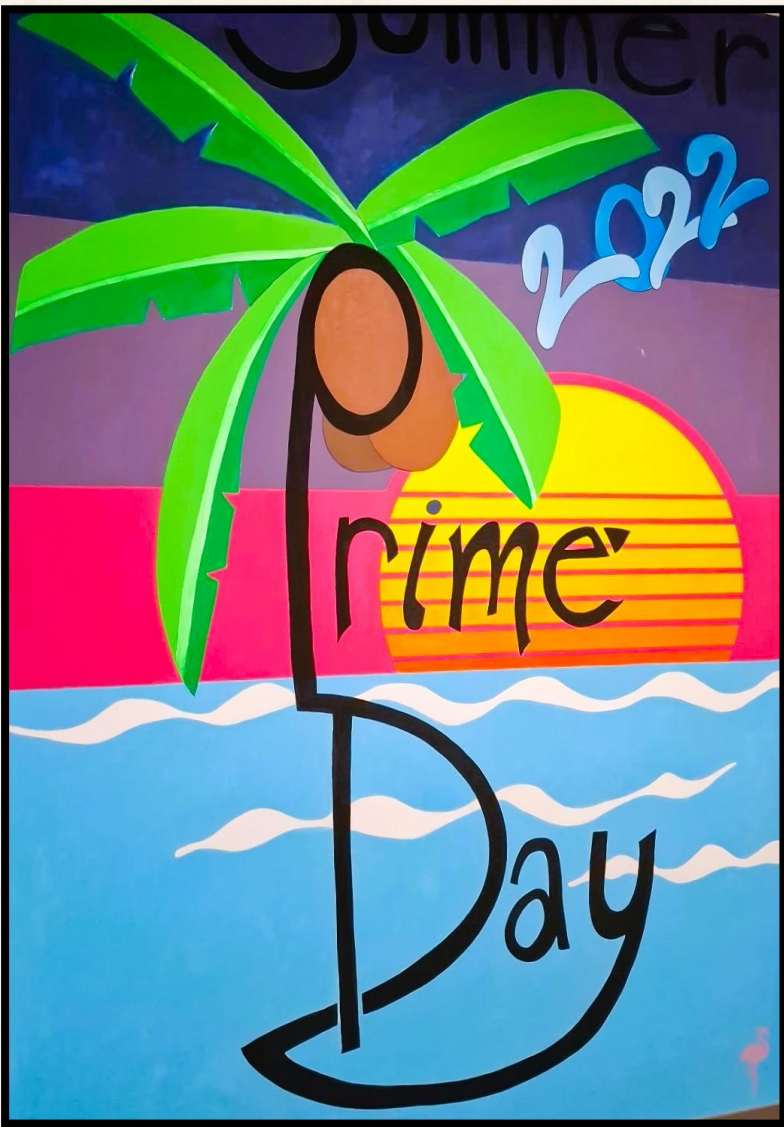


Because so many LEOH members wanted to go on the tour, tours on consecutive Mondays allowed all who were interested to attend.

To the left: Our very knowledgeable and enthusiastic tour guide, **Rochelle**, enjoyed adding her photo at the end of the tour.



The LEOH tour group on the following Monday stopped for a group photo in a hallway whose walls are covered in fun, colorful, and often thoughtful artwork adorned with Amazon employee names (see the following examples).



Lunch was a welcome ending to our outing!
Everyone enjoyed the fare at ***The '401*** in Bellaire.

*Note: The '401 catered LEOH's 2026 Spring Party Day lunch,
so we knew we would enjoy our meal!*



Thank you, **Jane Shinn, Ann Fairchild,**
and our Precinct One bus drivers,
for these entertaining, informative, and safe trips!

Future Trips - by Precinct 1 bus



Thursday, August 20: *Houston Public Media station (local TV Channel 8 and KUHF 88.7 FM radio)*

Wednesday, September 9: *Houston Brass Quintet matinee interactive performance*

Full details will follow closer to the trip date

Signing Up for a Trip

Trip Coordinator Ann Fairchild may be contacted at fairann@sbcglobal.net or **281-686-1325**.

She will publish complete trip details, with the opportunity to sign up, closer to the trip date.

If the traveler quota is full, you may ask to be put on a waiting list.