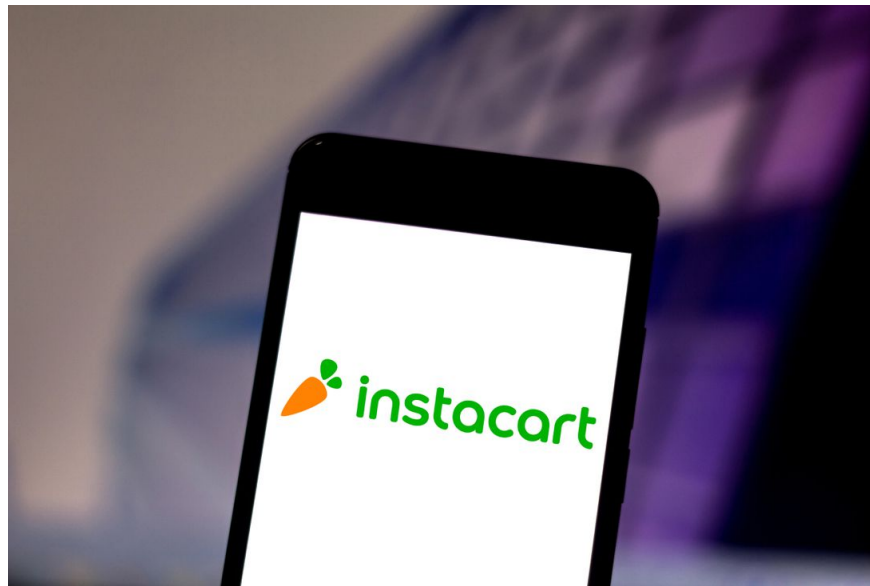


# Instacart quietly tells some workers they might've been exposed to COVID-19

Scoop: During the coronavirus pandemic, business has been booming for the grocery delivery company. But some workers say their lives are on the line.

Instacart has begun sending messages to some of its workers saying they may have been exposed to COVID-19. The move is to let those workers know where the exposure happened and what it's doing to support them.



The company has confirmed at least one incident, which happened in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After being notified by its grocery store partner in the area that a supermarket employee had tested positive for COVID-19, Instacart said it reached out to its workers who'd been in that same store.

"Out of an abundance of caution, we immediately communicated with the Instacart in-store shoppers who worked at the same location as this individual to ensure they had real-time details about the situation unfolding at their store," an Instacart spokeswoman said. "To the best of our knowledge, no Instacart shopper came into contact with this individual."

Instacart has both delivery people and in-store shoppers. The in-store shoppers are responsible for picking up and packing groceries, and delivery workers bring the goods to customers. The company says it's providing up to two weeks paid sick leave to workers who've been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are mandated to quarantine by a doctor. COVID-19 is the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, which has now infected more than 800,000 people and killed nearly 40,000 worldwide.

"As a part of our COVID-19 preparedness, over the last few weeks, we have been cleaning and disinfecting all Instacart staging areas and workstations several times a day," the Instacart spokeswoman said. "We have a dedicated team working around the clock in partnership with federal and local health officials to monitor this evolving situation."

The company has 150,000 workers in the US and Canada, and since the coronavirus has swept the region -- with shelter-in-place mandates in many major cities -- it's seen a massive boost in business. Instacart said it's had unprecedented customer demand and its order volume has grown by more than 150%. Last week it announced it would be recruiting 300,000 more workers over the next three months to meet that demand.

But many Instacart workers say the company isn't doing enough to protect them from COVID-19. On Monday, thousands of workers held a strike against the company demanding things like hazard pay and safety equipment. They also want the company to provide workers who are vulnerable to the virus with sick leave.

While the company met some of the workers' demands, such as providing hand sanitizer, it didn't address hazard pay or the vulnerable workers. Some Instacart workers also say that even though they have a doctor's letter saying to self-quarantine, they're having a difficult time getting the paid leave from the company.

One worker who was contacted by Instacart about being exposed to COVID-19 detailed what happened to Gig Workers Collective, which advocates on behalf of Instacart workers.

"We understand this has significant impact on you," Instacart wrote to the worker. "And want to make sure we provide support for you during this time."

The store, Star Market, confirmed to CNET that an employee did test positive for COVID-19. That person is now on medical leave.

"Given the unprecedented nature of the virus and its rate of spread, some might say it would only be a matter of time before Instacart and companies like it would have to face this scenario," Gig Workers Collective wrote in a blog post on Tuesday. "They are clearly comfortable playing Russian Roulette with not only workers' lives, but potentially with customers' lives as well."

**Correction, 12:21 p.m. PT:** The story was corrected to reflect that Instacart sent messages to in-store shoppers, not delivery workers, and that those shoppers might've been exposed to COVID-19, but didn't necessarily come into contact with the individual confirmed to have the virus.

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