

ARSON INVESTIGATION — SUSPICIOUS ORIGIN

Amazon / Kuehne+Nagel Warehouse Fire — Redlands, CA

Crisis Communication Analysis · June 5, 2020 · Media Crisis Analyst Report

FACILITY SIZE	ESTIMATED DAMAGE	EMPLOYEES EVACUATED	RESPONSE TIME
600K	\$100M+	~100	5.5 hrs
sq ft — ~8 football fields	Hundreds of millions reported	Self-evacuated · 0 injuries	Fire controlled by 11:00 AM

THE THREE CRISIS STAGES

Pre-crisis Before June 5, 2020 - Amazon facing mounting COVID-19 workplace safety criticism at warehouses nationwide - Kuehne+Nagel operating as 3rd-party logistics provider at new Redlands facility - Fire safety briefing held the day before the incident (employee accounts) - No documented pre-incident fire risk assessments made public - Building described as having "latest fire protections" — later contested	Crisis response June 5–12, 2020 5:30 AM: Three-alarm fire erupts, I-10 westbound closed - Roof and wall sections collapse within 15 minutes - Multi-agency response across San Bernardino County - Amazon issues single-sentence statement deflecting to Kuehne+Nagel - Employee contradicts fire chief: "no alarms, no sprinklers" - June 6: Second fire (solar panel malfunction, extinguished quickly) - Crews remain on scene ~1 week to manage hotspots	Post-crisis recovery June–October 2020 - ATF joins Redlands Fire + Police arson investigation - Cause officially classified as "suspicious in nature" - October 2020: \$5,000 ATF reward offered for tips - Amazon claims "minimal customer impact" via network redistribution - No public arrests in connection with the June 5 fire - Labor advocacy groups cite incident in broader Amazon safety debate
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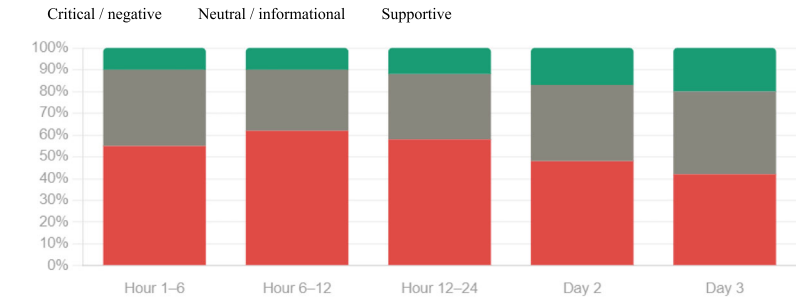
CRISIS TIMELINE — JUNE 5, 2020

5:30 AM	Fire ignites at 2255 W. Lugonia Ave. Three alarms triggered. Mutual aid requested across SB County
~5:45 AM	Roof collapses. Wall sections follow within minutes. Multiple Amazon big-rigs on loading docks catch fire
~6:00 AM	I-10 westbound closed. Smoke visible to nearby mountain communities. ~100 employees self-evacuated safely
~7:00 AM	Amazon issues statement: "This site was operated by a third party — we will support them." Liability deflection deployed
11:00 AM	Fire brought under control. I-10 reopens. Crews begin week-long hotspot suppression operation
June 6	Second fire attributed to faulty solar panels — quickly extinguished. Investigation scope widens
Oct 2020	ATF offers \$5K reward. Cause officially "suspicious." Joint investigation ongoing with no public arrests

AMAZON PR STRATEGY — RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

Third-party deflection	Legally sound / PR weak
Amazon immediately identified Kuehne+Nagel as the operator, distancing itself from liability. Factually accurate but perceived as deflective by media and employees.	
Employee safety acknowledgment	Effective
"We are glad everyone is safe" placed first in the statement — correctly prioritizing human outcomes before operational or financial concerns.	
First-responder gratitude	Effective
Thanking firefighters and first responders helped build goodwill with local communities and diverted attention from safety system failures.	
Fire safety contradiction	Crisis amplifier
Employee accounts ("no alarms, no sprinklers") directly contradicted the fire chief's "latest protections" claim — amplifying media scrutiny and public distrust.	
Operational continuity messaging	Mixed
"Minimal customer impact" reassured investors but struck critics as tone-deaf given simultaneous labor safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic.	

ESTIMATED SOCIAL MEDIA SENTIMENT — FIRST 72 HOURS



CRISIS COMMUNICATION SCORECARD

Speed of response	6/10	Transparency	3/10
Stakeholder empathy	5/10	Consistency of message	4/10
Community engagement	4/10	Employee safety messaging	7/10
Media relations	5/10	Long-term accountability	3/10
Overall crisis communication score			4.6 / 10
Adequate liability containment — insufficient stakeholder accountability			

Key negative drivers

Amazon deflection language · fire system contradiction · COVID-era labor safety context · I-10 traffic disruption

Key positive signals

Zero injuries · rapid evacuation · multi-agency fire response praised · Amazon operational continuity

ESTIMATED MEDIA COVERAGE VOLUME — MAJOR MILESTONES



KEY PUBLIC REACTION THEMES — CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

DOMINANT	Amazon accountability gap	SECONDARY	Worker safety contradiction	POSITIVE	Evacuation praised
Public and journalists questioned Amazon's rapid pivot to third-party framing. Critics noted that despite branding the facility as an "Amazon" site, the company accepted no direct responsibility for fire safety oversight.		The divergence between the fire chief's "latest protections" claim and employee reports of non-functioning alarms and sprinklers generated sustained media follow-up and union-affiliated commentary on social media.		The zero-injury outcome was widely acknowledged as a meaningful success. Employee and firefighter accounts of the rapid evacuation generated genuine positive sentiment that partially offset reputational damage.	

KEY CONTEXTUAL AMPLIFIER — COVID-19 LABOR BACKDROP

The Redlands fire occurred during a period of peak scrutiny of Amazon's pandemic-era warehouse working conditions. Amazon had faced congressional inquiries, walkouts at JFK8 in Staten Island, and sustained national media coverage about worker safety protocols. This background dramatically amplified public sensitivity to any Amazon facility incident involving worker risk — making the fire's framing far more consequential than it might have been in another year.