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Response

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The world's biggest online retailer said in a blog post updated on Tuesday morning that it was making the move "so we can more quickly receive, restock, and ship these products to customers." The aim is to keep warehouses stocked with the items people are buying now — toilet paper, bleach and sanitizing wipes — so Amazon is

temporarily not accepting shipments of nonessential goods like flat-screen

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warehouses in Spain and Italy have contracted the coronavirus, and those numbers could rise in the coming months as the disease spreads in Europe and the U.S. If enough workers get sick, Amazon could be forced to close some of its fulfillment centers, potentially putting its vaunted delivery machine in peril.

In the meantime, Amazon is telling third-party sellers that it won't accept shipments from them in other product categories through at least April 5. Amazon said it was taking a similar approach with the big brands it buys directly from.

"We understand this is a change for our selling partners and appreciate their understanding as we temporarily prioritize these products for customers," an Amazon spokesman said in an emailed statement. Products already on their way to Amazon warehouses will be accepted, he said.

The new prioritization applies to restocking, not Amazon's shipments of items already sitting on warehouse shelves.

The change only limits products sold through Fulfillment by Amazon, a service through which online merchants pay Amazon to store, pack and ship their products sold on the site. Amazon's marketplace merchants can continue to sell nonessential products, but they have to manage packing and shipping to customers on their own.

"There are going to be sellers who get hit hard, like people who have no way to ship outside of Fulfillment by Amazon," said Will Tjernlund, an e-commerce consultant in Minneapolis who helps 30 brands sell on Amazon. "But it shouldn't be the end of the world for too many people since there appears to be an end in sight."

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