

Contract employee dies in accident at Rouge Steel in Dearborn, Michigan

Helen Halyard
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At 5 a.m. Thursday morning a steel plant maintenance worker died after being overcome by noxious fumes during a routine maintenance job at Rouge Steel, located at the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan. The worker's name has not yet been released. This is now the third in a series of deadly accidents to take place at the 78-year-old facility during the past year.

On February 1 natural gas in Boiler # 6 ignited, causing an explosion and fire that swept through five floors of the building. Six workers died and fourteen others suffered serious injuries in what was the deadliest accident at an auto facility in 50 years and the worst in Ford's history. Just five months later, on July 19, slag fire erupted at Rouge Steel injuring one worker and destroying the roof of an abandoned garage.

In the recent tragedy, Rouge Steel reported that five outside contractor personnel employed by the Metro Industrial Contracting company were overcome by fumes while preparing for the normal downturn maintenance at its "B" blast furnace facility. A 45-year-old worker suffered cardiac arrest after being overcome by fumes and died. Another worker was sent to Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit for oxygen treatment and the three others were released.

Dearborn Fire Chief Jack MacArthur, in charge of investigating the February 1 blast, issued a statement that the source of the fumes has not yet been determined. He reported that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will direct the investigation into this accident because no fire was involved.

More than six months have passed since the February 1 explosion, with no official report issued on its underlying causes. Both the Dearborn Fire Department and OSHA have pushed back the date of its release. It

is now estimated that reports will be issued in the second week of September.

Since the February 1 explosion the United Auto Workers Union has collaborated with Ford Motor Company in their efforts to cover up the erosion of safety and health standards, which are being sacrificed in the drive to increase profitability at the direct peril of the thousands of workers employed at the sprawling Dearborn facility.



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