

“They don’t treat us like we’re human beings”

Faurecia auto parts workers in Saline, Michigan speak on conditions

Our reporters
10 January 2019

Reports in the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* exposing conditions at global auto parts maker Faurecia are being read by thousands and shared hundreds of times on Facebook. Both present and past workers from facilities in Saline and Sterling Heights, Michigan; Granger, Indiana; Simpsonville, Kentucky; Dexter, Missouri; Dayton, Ohio and many other locations are writing in to tell their own horror stories about working at the company.

The brutal exploitation they describe is not a uniquely American phenomenon. The auto parts maker is the sixth largest in the world, producing seating, interiors and emission controls, with factories in 35 countries.

Over the weekend a WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter* reporting team visited the Faurecia plant in Saline, Michigan. Workers described systematic brutality, intimidation and humiliation, bordering on industrial terror. Workers gave accounts of the company’s indifference to safety. Many workers commented on those who had died in the factory.

Violations of human dignity occur again and again. A woman with children scheduled for an eight-hour shift faces discipline and discharge if she cannot work overtime because she must pick up her kids. We were told that women are routinely denied adequate time for access to bathroom facilities, and the bathrooms themselves are filthy.

This brutal corporate regime is reinforced by the United Auto Workers. Many workers reported that the UAW does not respond to even basic grievances. The federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration, the supposed watchdog over safety, does nothing to change the situation.

A mood of anger is growing, and there is deep anger

at the UAW, which frustrates every effort workers undertake to defend themselves.

We are publishing some recent statements from Faurecia workers below, changing the names of those we interviewed to protect them from harassment and victimization.

Scott, a worker from the Saline plant said, “The bathrooms are disgusting, toilet paper everywhere, crap everywhere, trash cans overflowing, graffiti on the walls.

“We had two deaths on the line this past year. There was a woman who died of a heart attack at three in the morning. There was no medical staff on duty. The company doesn’t care whether we die or not.

“The union does nothing to help us. The last time our contract was up, we were ready to strike. At 11 o’clock at night, we had our coats on ready to walk out. Then the union rep came in and told us they had made a deal.

“What’s the point of even having a contract if the company can just go in and say, ‘Oh, we made your bonus too big,’ and take it away? Or they can just change your insurance whenever they want to?

“I work seven days a week, 12-hour days. I have to commute an hour each way every day. I have burns all over my hands from doing this work. People get hurt all the time.

“I read up on politics a lot. We need a revolution in this country.”

Chloe, a young mother who also works at the Saline plant wrote on Facebook, “When my bills are paid, there is nothing left.

“They claim we have good health insurance. At my first appointment, I had blood work done and I had to pay \$400.

“Very recently at Faurecia there was a ‘loyalty bonus’ paid out just before the holiday season. Now they are forcing [workers] to pay back half of the pre-tax amount. They are withholding \$50 from every paycheck. The union claims that the \$50 wage garnish was lower than it would have been without their intervention.

“This seems illegal. How is the union allowing this to happen? There are only four union representatives for nearly 2,000 workers. Again and again, I will hear of workers calling a representative, or texting a representative several days in a row, and receiving no response.

“I filed a complaint against a supervisor who had written me up without justification. I filed the complaint with human resources and with the union. HR contacted me, but the union never once contacted me.”

Many workers were affected by the deaths of their co-workers in the plant, noting the company’s brutal indifference.

“An hour after I left work on a Friday, the woman collapsed,” Chloe continued. “She had been complaining about chest pains, and had gone to medical, but after 5 PM on Friday, there’s not anyone in medical. So she came back up to the line, and soon after collapsed to the floor. Coworkers gave her CPR for a long time.

“Management didn’t send anybody home. They just moved employees around and forced them back to work. This worker definitely died in the plant. They had to wait for a coroner to arrive before they moved the body. Some young workers were fired for recording the event on their phones.”

Chloe went on to explain the disciplinary system in which a worker is fired after accumulating eight points. “Even if you go to medical throwing up and you have to go home, you still get a point,” she said. “If you have a medical condition and you cannot work seven days a week, you can’t keep the job. No one ever goes home.

“I know two or three people who crashed their car from exhaustion on the way to work. They had better get to work within an hour or they receive a point.

“It’s so inhuman. It’s cold. They don’t treat us like we’re human beings. They expect us to drop everything and work. My shift is 8 hours, from 7AM to

3PM, but they can come to me any day and demand that I stay until 7 PM. If I leave, I receive a point.

“I know a lot of people who have lost their job because they had to go pick up their kid. It makes it hard for single parents to keep a job. You get criticized for being on state assistance, but you can’t keep a job like this.”

The WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter* and the Socialist Equality Party call for the formation of rank-and-file factory committees independent of the pro-corporate UAW, to organize the defense of workers on the shop floor and take over the functions abandoned by the union. We encourage those who are interested in finding out more or who would like to relate conditions in their plant to contact us.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact