

“This is a horrible feeling”

Ford workers in Michigan respond to job cuts

Our reporters
22 May 2019

Hundreds of white-collar workers at Ford World Headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan, began receiving notifications Tuesday that their jobs were being eliminated by the automaker as part of a global restructuring demanded by Wall Street. The cuts will reportedly save Ford \$600 million annually.

According to Ford management, 500 salaried workers will be fired this week in addition to some 1,500 in the US that Ford claims have taken “voluntary” buyouts. Globally, some 7,000 white-collar jobs are set to go in this round of cuts.

The attack on jobs at Ford is part of a global restructuring of the auto industry amid falling sales and major changes in technology. Ford is slashing jobs worldwide including 5,000 in Germany as well as plant closures in France, Russia and Brazil.

Ford sales in China, a key market, fell 14.6 in April after falling 40 percent in 2018. Despite slowing car sales, Ford’s stock is up 34 percent since the beginning of the year.

Production cuts are also taking place in addition to the white-collar layoffs. In April, Ford laid off 1,000 workers, a full shift, at its Flat Rock Assembly plant outside of Detroit that produces the Mustang. Some 440 of those laid off were temporary workers, not eligible to transfer to other plants. The move is part of a plan to move away from the manufacture of all sedan-type vehicles.

While Ford investors celebrated, for employees the cuts are devastating.

Even though the company announced said it would not use security to escort workers out of the premises as it had in past downsizing, the cuts were still extremely painful as workers packed their personal items into boxes ahead of anticipated job cuts.

Workers leaving the Ford World Headquarters

building Tuesday were in a somber mood. One contract worker stopped to chat briefly with reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site*. Asked her reaction to the ongoing job cuts, she responded, “I made it through the day.”

She continued, “I am wishing the best for everyone, including myself.” She said she worked for an outside company but heard “that a few of us might be let go too. Everyone is anxious.”

Many workers took to the Internet to express their anger, indicating the enormous toll being taken by the layoffs. One white-collar worker at Ford World Headquarters wrote, “Watching people you’ve worked with for so many years walk out and waiting to see if you are next. ... This is a horrible feeling.

Another wrote, “If someone told me it would end like this 14 years ago, I would call that person crazy. A company I gave my best years to screwed me over when I needed security the most in my life, 4 years away from my pension. Walking the extra mile all these years doesn’t count, nothing counts.

“Don’t want to sound pathetic, no one died, it will work out in the end, but it’s a damn shame to be betrayed by the organization I devoted my life to. Let this be a lesson to the younger folks.”

Yet another said, “It looks like that today is the day when workers were hit with the sad truth. Ford, as we know it, and as we remember it is no longer a living entity. There is something that [bears] the same name, but has little to do with the company we enjoyed working for. I wish good luck to everyone.”

“Thanks for catching us off guard. They said IT will be in June, and we lost at least 25+ in the LL ranks. One person was even walked out, contrary to the article. So whatever was said was a lie...,” another worker wrote. “And don’t even get started on Fords

cultural training everyone had to take! Putting people first?! Yeah right. ...”

A number of posts suggested that higher seniority and higher-paid employees were being targeted for elimination.

“How well you perform your job has nothing to do with this lay off. It is all about cutting big salaries. If you are at least 55 and 30 years in you are standing on quick sand. Just let go this morning. I’ve moved all over with this company, took huge financial hits having to sell home and relocate when housing market tanked. I’ve easily clocked 70 hour work weeks, took work on vacations too.”

The WSWs also spoke to James, a production worker at Dearborn Assembly a few miles from Ford World Headquarters. He noted that job cuts were also taking place in Ford’s factories. “The layoffs of production workers have already started at Rouge [Ford’s flagship assembly plant where the highly-profitable F-150 pick-up trucks are produced].

“They are going through the process of bumping people to make way for the 200 that were transferred from Flat Rock.”

He responded to the claim that the cuts at Flat Rock Assembly would not lead to permanent layoffs because workers could transfer to other plants.

“That was a lie,” James continued. “They are already starting with a lot of ‘go home early’s’ and giving people the option to stay, or to leave after 3.9 hours. That is just the first step to putting people on the street.”



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