

“They don’t care if you die. All they want is output”

Autoworkers denounce official coronavirus response, call for plant shutdowns

Marcus Day
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Work in the auto industry, or have a family member who does? We want to hear how the coronavirus pandemic is impacting you, and what you think workers should demand to address it. Email us at autoworkers@wsws.org, or message us at the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter Facebook page. Comments will be published anonymously.

Autoworkers have flooded the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* with messages in recent days, denouncing the criminally negligent response of the companies and unions to the coronavirus pandemic, raising concerns about the number of potentially undiagnosed workers, and calling for the shut down of factories in order to stop the further spread of the disease.

The World Socialist Web Site and the Socialist Equality Party call on workers to form rank-and-file committees to force a shutdown of all non-essential industries, including the auto industry, with full compensation for workers’ lost hours. Trillions should be allocated from the bank accounts of the rich and the major corporations and put at the disposal of society to combat the outbreak. A rational and coordinated global response to the pandemic is blocked by the profit motive of the capitalists, who are deliberately endangering the lives of millions by forcing workers to remain on the job.

Below is a selection of workers’ comments.

FCA Windsor Assembly, Windsor, Ontario, Canada

As far as I know, I am to report to work tomorrow [Monday]. They don’t care about us lowly workers! We are their bottom line!

We did not walk out last week. What did happen was many refused to work after an employee self-quarantined. In essence, the line stopped on Thursday afternoon and resumed Friday afternoon but employees were still there doing nothing. And as far as I know, afternoon shift resumed full production on Friday.

It boggles my mind that the execs are asked to work remotely from home to lessen the contagion ... but we have to go to work where 6,000 people work? That’s not even sensible!! I have no faith or hope in our corrupt system which is every facet of the industry. Common sense needs to prevail.

Jefferson North Assembly, Detroit, Michigan

[We heard] somebody in the plant was tested positive. Union and the supervisors aren’t saying anything. FCA HQ sending everyone out to work from home. They don’t give a F--- about us. Management is not protecting us.

There is shock, pandemonium and fear. I went to GFS [Gordon Food Service] and there was literally nothing on the shelves, all the cleaning products were out. Same thing at the Family Dollar. No Lysol, cleaning supplies, bathroom or paper towel. Same thing at Walmart in Livonia. People don’t trust the government to protect them so they are hoarding supplies. It was an eye-opener to me.

Resources should be allocated to the people, ventilators, cures, access to medical care with no fees or costs.

FCA Sterling Heights Assembly, Sterling Heights, Michigan

Worker 1:

No one is happy. We figured out SHAP is running until we run out of parts. We have enough fuel tanks for one more week of production. There were people who had the virus inside and were sent home.

Worker 2:

They’ve done nothing. I feel as though they shouldn’t be running production. [We’ve heard] there are cases in my plant, and they’ve done nothing about it. They claim that they’ll be setting up hand sanitizing stations, but they are yet to be seen.

Ford Dearborn Truck, Dearborn, Michigan

There was a letter by a union official [Local 600 President Bernie Ricke] that states the plant produces so much product that we can’t shut down. We’re subjected to the virus. There are no restrictions on work. We have families and no one supports the workers.

FCA Toledo Jeep, Toledo, Ohio

Worker 1:

I got a voicemail from Chrysler saying they were calling all TPTs in to work Monday. They also sent the full-time workers home. My husband only worked three days last week. That’s the first time he’s worked less than a whole week since Christmas. The TPTs don’t have paid time off either if they get

sick.

What I want to know is how was China and a few other countries able to stop this disease so quickly, while in America, the richest country in the world, we can't. I am currently on unemployment because my other job won't allow me to work. I can barely make ends meet.

Worker 2:

I'm very scared about the situation. Work has only handed out paperwork for us to sign about the virus. Also, [they said] if we feel other employees might have it to report them. They haven't supplied us with any sanitizer. I myself have my own. Nor have they come to us to speak about it personally. I understand they don't want to lose money, but why take the chance of us getting infected by it? God forbid that any of us get it, then nobody will be able to even build the Jeeps...

FCA Tipton Transmission, Tipton, Indiana

Worker 1:

We all know the union is in bed with the man. They don't care if you die. All they want is output of transmissions. Where I work, they treat you like it's a prison camp. You're surrounded by barbed wire. Walking into Chrysler is like clocking into the gates of hell. You're judged by race and gender.

The union does NOT help you; they lie and manipulate to make you think they're helping you. You would think the UAW safety reps would shut down the plants; there is one in each plant, some for each shift. They should be made accountable for why they are not doing anything for the union brothers or sisters. They should be pressuring the plant to shut down.

Worker 2:

We have had numerous confirmed cases with workers at the Tipton transmission plant and they are covering it up and making us work. If this doesn't open the people's eyes, nothing will.

This company and union don't give a damn about any of us workers. They just keep stealing our union dues and living the high life. Everyone has found out exactly what is thought of the workers. We are treated like farm animals. We're a bunch of slaves for the rich and their families, and we will be until the people take back what's rightfully theirs.

FCA Kokomo Transmission, Kokomo, Indiana

I saw a CNBC host state that they should give everyone the virus at once so they can get over it and the economy can get back to normal.

We have tons of extra transmissions. There's no reason we can't take a week or two to help with spread.

GM Fort Wayne Assembly, Fort Wayne, Indiana

If I knew there was a case at my plant I would walk out too [referring to wildcat actions in Italy and Windsor, Ontario]. Ford, Chrysler, GM, all of them, they don't care about the workers at all, all they care about is money. They told us to wash our hands and that's it. You are replaceable. I know if I

got sick and died they would replace me, and it can happen to anyone else too.

Ford Chicago Assembly, Chicago, Illinois

I don't think Ford has done enough in my opinion. As long as you have a large amount of people from all walks of life in one place together you run the risk. Everyone has a life outside of work and who is to say that they didn't go out somewhere [and came into] contact with someone who unknowingly has the virus? Then they unknowingly have it and return to work. Then you'll see the domino effect, and that's scary.

Android, Arlington, Texas

I work in the Arlington Android plant, which works hand in hand with the GM Arlington plant that builds the SUVs. I personally believe we should take this time they're asking off. Our kids have been dismissed from school until March 30.

A lot of us have close family that needs to stay protected. I am writing this email as I stand in line at the third grocery store I've been to today since I got off work at 2:15 to buy needed supplies for my family to maintain these two to three weeks. Shelves are bare. It is apparently more serious than we anticipated. Please consider our safety as well.

Ford Kansas City Assembly, Kansas City, Missouri

At KCAP [Ford Kansas City Assembly Plant] we have heard a B shift supervisor has the virus and today a girl thought she had it on C shift and they couldn't care less. They weren't even going to make her go to medical.

GM Wentzville Assembly, Wentzville, Missouri

Worker 1:

A coworker came to me and said a person was taken off of work recently because of coronavirus exposure. They should've shut down the plant immediately. They canceled one shift three days later. But this is a plant with over 4,000 people. Now there are many people around here who are sick.

It's like a joke to the company. They're putting our health at risk. We've got so many people in their 50s and 60s.

Worker 2:

There definitely have been people saying that we should walk out until business is shut down. Have you seen how only now the UAW is advocating for management to close [Louisville Assembly]? Too little too late.

If this is the event that makes working people take matters into their own hands I won't be surprised.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact