

GM threatens to end medical benefits for temporary workers at parts depot

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25 April 2020

The United Auto Workers has informed workers at the General Motors Customer Care and Aftersales (CCA) facility in Burton, Michigan that the company has not agreed to extend medical benefits for temporary workers or anyone with less than 1 year seniority past April 30. Workers were given until April 27 to come back to work or be cut off from their benefits.

GM had been operating the CCA facilities that supply replacement parts to dealerships on a voluntary basis during the pandemic. At least four workers at the Burton CCA had tested positive for COVID-19.

The ultimatum to CCA workers, issued through management's UAW mouthpiece, is part of a drive by the auto companies to enforce an early return to work starting in early May. GM production workers are being told to plan for a May 4 return to work, although that date has not been definitely confirmed yet. Workers at assembly plants have been asked to return on a voluntary basis the week of April 27 to prepare for the restart of production.

Fiat Chrysler workers report that management is calling all workers, production and skilled trades back into its US and Canadian plants on May 4. Ford has not set a restart date, but is likely watching what happens at FCA. Toyota has also announced a restart of production for the first week in May, as have Volkswagen and Hyundai. French-based auto parts supplier Faurecia has joined the list of companies planning to restart production, saying it will reopen its Michigan plants May 4.

In advance of the restart of production, the United Auto Workers (UAW) has engaged in talks with Ford, GM and Fiat Chrysler to provide them with a cover. The automakers had to agree to temporary shutdowns after a wave of wildcat strikes hit facilities in the US and Canada.

In advance of the re-opening, FCA has issued largely cosmetic and unworkable safety protocols, undoubtedly worked out with the UAW, including temperature checks and social distancing, impossible in factories with thousands of workers on each shift.

An FCA Jefferson North worker in Detroit who had reviewed the proposal told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "Some of that is ridiculous. I don't see how they will pull it off. They have put markers leading from the turnstiles to the parking lot, six feet apart where they will have us standing in a single file line. We will be coming in and day shift coming out ... We have to fill out a COVID-19 questionnaire every day. That means we will have to get to work 2 hours before the shift.

"They have tables marked off—the green x's are where you can sit. Where are you going to put the other people? They will allow you to bring a folding chair, but where will you put them if we are supposed to be six feet apart?

"They are going to give each worker two masks for 10-hour shift. Ten minutes to sanitize your work area. They will add five minutes to breaks. I want to see how all of this going to work.

"You have to bring your lunch because there will be no restaurant or food service. There will be no vending machines. If they don't allow backpacks or bags, how are you going to bring your lunch?

An FCA worker at the Sterling Heights Assembly north of Detroit told the WSWS, "I think the big reasons they are pushing for people to go back is because they want to be making money. We used to joke at the plant about this kind of thing. We would say 'I'm just a 'CID' number.' That is the number you use to clock in. What we mean was we are just a number to them. What it really all about is profit, about making money."



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