

# Production stoppage continues Friday at Fiat Chrysler Jefferson North auto plant in Detroit over COVID-19

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*The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter calls on workers at Jefferson North and throughout the auto industry to organize rank-and-file safety committees to protect worker health and save lives. For assistance in forming these committees, contact us at [wsws.org/rankandfile](http://wsws.org/rankandfile).*

*Read the statement of the Jefferson North Rank-and-File Committee.*

**Update Friday 3:30 p.m.:** Workers at the Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit are still refusing to work after at least three workers tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday. FCA management, along with the UAW, attempted to restart production after the 1:38 p.m. break. The line was restarted but workers refused to work.

“We aren’t working, everyone is back on blue line,” a worker told the WSWs Autoworker Newsletter. “They just started the line, but nobody moved. Only five Jeeps have been produced today. They are upset we’re sticking together and fearless. They hate it. There is angry disbelief, that they keep lying to us about the COVID cases and then expect us to work like it is business as usual. SHAP, Toledo and the other plants should be out with us too. None of these factories are safe.”

The job action began with “A Crew” workers who downed their tools and forced production to stop Thursday at noon. “B Crew” workers continued the work stoppage from 4:30 p.m. Thursday to nearly 2 a.m. Friday morning when management and union officials forced some workers, including temporary part-time workers (TPTs), who have no job security, to resume partial production.

When “C Crew” workers reported to the plant around 3:30 a.m. Friday morning, however, they resumed the work stoppage. Workers have posted videos to appeal for support.

FCA is now calling in B Crew workers to start production by 4:30 p.m. One B Crew worker told the WSWs Autoworker Newsletter: “They have not told us not to come in. Are you kidding? We were down for 8 1/2 hours yesterday and produced only 67 Jeeps, one-tenth of the normal output. If we made only one-twentieth it would have been worth it for them. Those 67 Jeeps sell for \$55,000 each and that brought in \$3.68 million in revenue.

“They are more concerned about profits than workers’ lives. Now you have Trump and Pence going around saying the only

reason there is a big jump in COVID cases is because there is more testing. That’s like saying there would be no police brutality if no one reported police brutality.”

The news media has blacked out any news of the work stoppage at the factory, fearful that opposition will spread, and the industry will be shut down like it was after a series of wildcat strikes in mid-March. Autoworkers from around the country, however, who have learned about the job action from the WSWs, have expressed their solidarity with Jefferson workers.

“I feel that they should shut all the plants back down until they get this under control. We shouldn’t have to risk our lives to be able to work while the UAW takes our money and doesn’t fight for our lives. I work at a plant, so I understand what you all are going through. I heard some have been sick over here to and they are keeping it on a down low saying it’s in other departments. But it’s in the building and everyone is using the same bathrooms and lunchrooms. It’s impossible for them to keep something like this under control in a plant.”

**Update Friday noon:** Workers at the Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit are refusing to work after at least three workers tested positive for COVID-19. The job action began with “A Crew” workers who downed their tools and forced production to stop Thursday at noon.

“B Crew” workers continued the work stoppage from 4:30 p.m. Thursday afternoon to nearly 2:00 a.m. Friday, when management and union officials forced some workers, including temporary part-time workers (TPTs), who have no job security, to resume partial production.

When “C Crew” workers reported to the plant around 3:30 a.m. Friday morning, however, they resumed the work stoppage. Workers have posted videos to appeal for support. One worker involved in the action Friday told the WSWs Autoworker Newsletter, “We (C) crew aren’t working. We are protesting and everyone is on the blue lines (away from the assembly line). The union is nowhere to be found.

“B crew stood their ground, but management made the TPTs work toward the end. We are refusing to start the line back up and run. At least half the plant isn’t working. There is angry disbelief that they keep lying to us about the COVID cases and then expect us to work like it is business as usual.

“All the other plants should be out with us too. These factories

are not safe.”

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Day shift workers at the Fiat Chrysler Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit were sent home early Thursday afternoon over health concerns after workers staged a protest amid reports that three workers were diagnosed with cases of COVID-19 at the plant. As of this writing, workers on the second shift, known as the “B Crew,” have refused to resume production, although supervisors and union officials have used a combination of threats and false claims to convince workers to restart the assembly line.

The action comes as COVID-19 cases are surging in wide areas of the US after the ending of lockdown measures and the reopening of factories, restaurants and other workplaces, including the restart of auto production. On Monday, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) and Ford resumed full operations at factories across North America.

A worker at Jefferson told the World Socialist Web Site *Autoworker Newsletter*, “There were three confirmed cases on ‘A Crew’ and they were forced to shut the line down 3 1/2 hours before the end of the shift, around 12 noon. It wasn’t management or the union, it was the workers who shut the line.

“People are super-pissed. They haven’t started production on ‘B Crew’ yet. They are ready to walkout. The union officials are nowhere to be found. People are saying, ‘Why are we here when people got sick?’ We heard it was one worker in engine and two workers in trim who tested positive.”

A worker writing on the United Auto Workers Local 7 Facebook page reported, “Someone got sick and threw up on parts that have been distributed around the plant since 8am. Where is our union to handle these situations? People are being threatened for refusing to work with those parts...”

Another worker posted, “Someone had COVID on A crew and they stopped the line at 12 and refused to work. All I know is when we got here, engine line refused to work and we only did a few cars, then we stopped. Now the whole plant is down. There were 3 cases of COVID in here today.”

An evening shift worker wrote, “The Axle loop has refused to work because of the 3 positive COVID-19 on A crew today. I’ve seen everyone in a huddle for hours now. The plant manager, the entire management team seems to be there now. Our UAW reps... everyone who is anyone is over there trying to negotiate with the peeps from the Axle group. But they are standing firm and STILL refusing to work.”

One worker posted his support on Facebook: “Hope y’all shut down; we came back too early anyway they knew this could happen Greed.”

A female worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, “Line still not working at JNAP. Only 10 cars or 2 minutes on production on ‘B’ Crew. Someone got sick on the line. The workers on engine and axle are refusing to work. The plant manager and the UAW officials are trying to get them to restart production, but they won’t. But company officials will not shut down the plant. It’s just too much potential money for them. If they could get 45 minutes of production out of us between 2:15 and 3:00 am, they would do it.”

In late May there had been reports of an unexplained illness at

the Jefferson plant that caused several workers to collapse. There was no interruption of production or even measures taken to ensure the disinfection of the plant.

This is not the first report of job actions over COVID-19 concerns since the auto plants reopened on May 18. Last month, workers at the Ford Dearborn Truck plant briefly stopped production after the discovery of coronavirus cases. Some workers at the General Motors plant in Wentzville, Missouri also staged a walkout after workers tested positive for COVID-19.

In mid-March, unofficial job actions by workers at Windsor Assembly, Sterling Heights Assembly, Dundee Engine and Toledo North forced FCA and then all automakers to suspend production. Production was restarted last month in concert with a propaganda campaign by the corporations, the media and the UAW that new safety protocols would protect workers from the deadly disease.

The wildcat actions were taken by workers in defiance of the UAW, which has worked as a police force for management throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

While FCA has boasted of resuming full operations and vowing not to carry out another shutdown of operations, the auto companies are facing high levels of absenteeism due to the resistance of workers to exposing themselves and their families to COVID-19. Manpower shortages continue despite the hiring of more temporary part-time workers, extended shifts and Sunday overtime. A worker at Sterling Heights Assembly reported that he had heard of one worker who put in 120 hours in one week.

“Workers are exhausted,” he said. “They are more susceptible to illness. Some are getting off at 3am and then going back at noon.”

Even as it subjects workers to the danger of COVID-19, FCA is the beneficiary of a \$6.9 billion bailout from the government of Italy and massive tax cuts from city officials in Detroit.

No one is going to defend the lives and health of workers but workers themselves. That is why workers must elect rank-and-file safety committees, independent of the bribed UAW, to assert control over health and safety conditions, including work hours and line speeds. Where conditions are unsafe, there must be a stoppage of work. At the same time, workers must demand full protective gear, regular testing, universal health care and guaranteed income and the distribution of information. FCA workers should unite with workers throughout the US and internationally in a unified struggle against capitalism, a system that sacrifices human life for corporate profit.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**