

Workers have a right to know about COVID-19 in their plants!

Statement of the Autoworker Rank-and-File Safety Committee Network
10 August 2020

The Autoworker Rank-and-File Safety Committee Network is a national organization of workers throughout the auto industry who have organized to oppose the unsafe return to work by the auto companies and the United Auto Workers. The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter stands ready to assist autoworkers and other workers in establishing safety committees at their own workplaces. Email the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter at autoworkers@wsws.org to learn more.

Autoworkers are being deprived of the most basic information about the spread of COVID-19 in their plants and workplaces.

We know the coronavirus is spreading in the factories, and the so-called safety measures aren't stopping it. We see workers get sick on the line. We share what little information we can get using social media and word of mouth. Some of our brothers and sisters will even take it upon themselves to post on Facebook when they test positive to alert others, because they know the companies won't inform anyone.

Work is becoming a daily horror movie. At Ford Dearborn Truck in Michigan last week, two people got sick, and they were whisked away and people on the line didn't know what was going on. At Fiat Chrysler's Belvidere plant in Illinois, someone tested positive, and they were also snuck off the line by management.

At Toledo Jeep, we know that 75 workers have tested positive or are waiting for results. There were already at least 44 cases at GM Wentzville by the end of July. The companies keep saying these infections were contracted outside the plants, but why should we believe them?

Then they have the gall to try blame us for not being careful enough in our daily lives, while they keep us packed together on the lines, unable to social distance, and don't pay us when we have to quarantine.

It's not just the Big Three. At the auto parts plants and suppliers like Faurecia, Lear, Syncreon and others, our brothers and sisters are also being kept in the dark and subjected to the same deadly conditions. And our brothers in Mexico have told us how General Motors simply sends workers who feel sick back to the line, potentially infecting others.

The UAW is doing nothing to help us. When we ask for information or raise our concerns, they defend the companies and try to say that we can't do anything. But it's no surprise they're working with management to cover up the spread of cases, given everything we know about the bribery and crimes they've engaged in.

The companies and the UAW couldn't care less about protecting workers' privacy. All they care about is keeping the lines running. They're using HIPAA and privacy laws as a smokescreen, hoping we don't ask too many questions.

The real reason they don't want to admit how many cases are in the plants is because they know they'd have an uprising on their hands if workers knew the full truth.

We say: Workers have a right to know how far COVID-19 is spreading in their workplaces!

We completely reject the justifications given by the companies and the UAW for depriving us of this vital information. Their arguments have no basis in science or public health. All they're thinking about is profit. How can we protect ourselves or make informed decisions about our health and safety if we don't know where a disease is that can kill us, or kill our families?

We demand the following:

- All workers must be immediately notified of any cases of COVID-19 and all areas and shifts that are affected. This information cannot be kept secret from workers.

- The companies must keep a total count of positive and potential COVID-19 cases, updated in real time, that is available to all workers.

- Workers must have regular, universal testing. Temperature checks and self-reporting symptoms are just so much PR.

- We will not be targeted, written up, terminated or harassed in any way for taking time off to get tested and get results, or for raising concerns about safety.

- When there's a case confirmed, the factory should be closed for at least 24 hours for deep cleaning, not just the affected area, but the whole plant.

- Social distancing must be implemented at all times—when entering and leaving the plant and during bathroom, lunch and other break times.

- Whenever conditions are not safe, we have the right to collectively refuse to work without any threat of retaliation by management or the union.

The same corporate politicians who forced us back to work before it was safe are now trying to force our children and their teachers to go back to school while the pandemic is even more out of control. Things are only going to get worse until we all stand together—autoworkers, teachers, nurses and healthcare workers, service workers, transportation and delivery workers—and fight for our rights, in the US and in every country.

We call on our brothers and sisters: raise these demands! Share this statement on social media. Join a rank-and-file safety committee or organize one at your plant. Workers deserve to be treated like human beings, not slaves.

Signed,

- FCA Sterling Heights Rank-and-File Safety Committee

- FCA Jefferson North Rank-and-File Safety Committee

- FCA Toledo Jeep Rank-and-File Safety Committee

- Ford Dearborn Truck Rank-and-File Safety Committee



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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