Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee calls for plantwide shutdown to guarantee safety during pandemic

Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee
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The Rank-and-File Safety Committee at the Faurecia Gladstone auto parts plant in Columbus, Indiana has issued a statement denouncing the unequal treatment of workers who have been exposed to the coronavirus in different parts of the factory, calling for a plantwide shutdown to carry out a professional sterilization of the facility.

There has been a running battle between rank-and-file workers on one side and the company—working closely with the local union—on the other, over COVID-19 exposures, forced overtime and generally inhumane conditions, compounded by demands to fill production quotas while disregarding safety.

When Lisa, the supervisor over production of Dodge truck exhaust systems, reported that her son had a temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit and that she was exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, the company sent her to get tested, and the entire department was sent home to self-quarantine without pay. The department includes a substantial section of the plant, but when other supervisors and gap leaders tested positive and were sent into quarantine, no such measures were taken.

The virus is spreading uncontrollably throughout the plant, and workers are increasingly angry because cases are being concealed by the union (the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, IBEW) and the company. Various sections of the workforce that have been exposed are being forced to work without sterilizing the shop or being provided proper protection from the contagion.

The multinational auto corporation PSA Group, the French parent company of Peugeot, has just declared that it would not, as had been expected, spin off its 46 percent share in Faurecia. This is according to *Automotive News*, which wrote: “PSA … will scrap the spin-off of its 46 percent stake in Faurecia. The supplier was capitalized at 5.9 billion euros ($7 billion) at Monday’s market closing, the companies said.”

The full significance of the announcement is not yet clear. Faurecia, which makes a wide variety of interiors, exhaust systems and other parts for automakers, ranks number eight on the *Automotive News* list of the top 100 global suppliers, with worldwide sales to automakers of $19.9 billion in 2019. All the auto giants, including the PSA Group which is set to merge with Fiat Chrysler early next year, are engaged in a bitter struggle for market share and competitive advantage.

The Columbus, Indiana, rank-and-file safety committee was formed last month to fight the spread of the deadly coronavirus, brutal working conditions and the systematic victimization of whistleblowers, all of which were imposed through blatant collusion between the company, government OSHA inspectors and the company union IBEW Local 1424.

This is the statement of the committee.

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SHUT DOWN THE INFECTED FACTORY! FULL PROFESSIONAL STERILIZATION UNDER THE CONTROL AND SUPERVISION OF THE RANK-AND-FILE!

Brothers and sisters at Faurecia Gladstone across the US and around the world:

We formed this Rank-and-File Safety Committee to protect our lives and those of our coworkers from the deadly coronavirus and from the other hazards we face every day in the plant. Management and the IBEW won’t tell us who has COVID-19, and they refuse to

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implement universal testing and safe work practices. They say it's against the law. That is a lie. The law they are referring to is HIPAA.

The purpose of HIPAA is to prevent employers from misusing health information, like if a worker has an AIDS diagnosis. It's there to protect the employees from the company, not the company from the employees. To invoke HIPAA during a pandemic is turning it completely upside down.

HIPAA has an exception for disclosures "to persons at risk," where the law authorizes disclosures "as necessary to prevent or control the spread of disease." We reject Faurecia's attempt to mislead and intimidate us, and we advance these demands:

• FULL SHUTDOWN OF THE FAURECIA GLADSTONE FACTORY FOR STERILIZING! Full shutdown of the entire facility to be cleaned and sterilized by a professional cleaning service under the direct supervision of the rank and file. Company management and the union have forfeited any authority they ever had to keep us safe. Infections over the last two weeks alone are proof enough of that.

• Faurecia must notify the rank and file of every case of COVID-19 and what areas have been affected. We have explained that the company's assertion that it is against the law to provide this life-saving information is false. This vital information cannot be concealed from us any longer.

• We demand daily testing for everyone on site, rapid results and the highest-quality health care paid for by the company for any and all family members who become ill. Combined with thorough contact tracing, this is the only way to scientifically control the pandemic.

• Every confirmed case must be traced, tracked and sanitized with a full shutdown of the plant for 24 hours of cleaning and sanitizing under rank-and-file supervision, including consultation with doctors and scientific experts.

• Inhumane work hours and schedules must end. We cannot maintain health and safety without a return to the eight-hour day in a 40-hour week with full and adequate compensation. We have the right to proper rest, recreation and healthy lives for ourselves and our families.

• We demand an immediate end to company efforts at intimidation and victimization of whistleblowers or any other workers who point to unsafe conditions and dangerous work practices. Abusive language and hazardous work practices must stop now.

• Whenever conditions are unsafe, we have the right to collectively refuse to work without any threat of retaliation from management or the union.

We call on workers and students everywhere to join with us in supporting and building the network of rank-and-file safety committees to prepare united industrial and political actions to defend the health and safety of all workers, their families and communities.

This is a global problem. Everywhere we confront the conspiracy of global corporations, their governments and unions. We must build the strongest world network to combine our struggles worldwide, beginning with a general strike against the homicidal reopening of schools, factories and workplaces.

To join the rank-and-file safety committee at your plant, or for assistance in establishing a committee, contact the World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter *at* autoworkers@wsws.org.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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