Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee demands two-week shutdown to stop coronavirus spread

Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee
19 October 2020

In response to the emergence of a new cluster of c oronavirus cases at the factory last week, the Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee, founded in August to oppose the spread of the contagion, inhumane working conditions and the systematic victimization of whistleblowers, has issued the following statement. To join the committee, contact the World Socialist Web Site *at autoworkers@wsws.org.*

A week ago Sunday, one of our forklift drivers was hospitalized with COVID-19. Within two days a supervisor and three pack mule drivers tested positive for the virus as well. We have heard from coworkers that about half a dozen workers were also sent home with symptoms and had likely also been infected by the deadly contagion.

The company and the IBEW both refuse to tell us anything about who was infected and who else may be at risk as a result. We are left to search Facebook and pass the word on the grapevine. They claim that the HIPAA law prevents them from giving us this vital information, which is an outright lie. HIPAA has an exception for disclosures "to persons at risk" and specifically authorizes disclosures when "necessary to prevent or control the spread of disease." The company has another reason for concealing infections.

For months the deadly virus has been spreading in our factory, in our schools and in our communities with nothing being done to stop it. With 20 new cases in just 24 hours, last Saturday was the worst day of the pandemic in Bartholomew County. We now have a total of 1,363 here and 145,977 cases statewide. As of Saturday afternoon, Indiana and Ohio had already topped their previous records for single-day infections. Worldwide COVID-19 cases set a record, surpassing 400,000 new cases in a single day.

The company makes a pretense of safety precautions with split-second temperature checks and a mask rule. But how can we protect ourselves from COVID-19 when basic sanitation measures are thrown out the window? Our hand sink had no water last week and the bathrooms were so filthy they had to be shut down and power-washed.

Faurecia responded to this latest shocking outbreak by starting to test us on Wednesday. This is too little and too late. If there are a dozen infections that we know about, how many more are there that we do not know about?

What we want to know is: "Why did they wait six months into the pandemic before giving us tests?" There can be only one logical answer. They do not care about our safety. Their motive is simply to find another pretext to keep us working and producing profits for their investors.

Neither the union nor the company has paid any attention to the suffering and stress that we face every day. All they care about is their parts. We come to work knowing that we are putting our lives at risk. What's worse is the danger that we may carry the virus home to our families.

The companies and their political representatives of both the Democratic and Republican parties are pursuing the criminal policy of herd immunity. In plain language, this means "let it rip." The wealthy investors never set foot in the factory, and their managers hide in air-conditioned offices. It is our health and safety that bear the brunt of their homicidal policy.

Neither the company nor the union can be trusted to provide a safe work environment. Just the opposite,

© World Socialist Web Site

they are working us beyond the point of exhaustion, and many of our coworkers have already gone to an early grave. Government watchdogs, such as OSHA, for example, have been called many times and done nothing. They are trying to scare people to make us come to work by saying the factory will shut its doors and not reopen if we don't come to work. But this only means that the safety of workers conflicts with the profit motives of the corporations.

Like many companies that operated during the lockdowns, claiming that they were engaged in "essential production," we have heard that Faurecia received government subsidies to pay extra for hazardous duty. If they did, we never saw it. We can only assume that the company kept the government handouts that were supposed to go to those of us who endured the hazards of working during the pandemic.

We cannot trust the company. We must have a full account of all public funds that were funneled into the coffers of the corporation and its largest stock holders.

These are our just demands:

1. Because of the widespread character of the current outbreak, the factory must be closed for 14 days to carry out thorough sanitizing measures throughout the whole plant by professionals at the company's expense and supervised by a committee of the most trusted workers selected by the rank and file. All workers must be fully compensated for lost time due to these safety measures. Any money which Faurecia received from the CARES Act must be made available for this purpose.

2. We want the truth. We must be notified immediately of every case of COVID-19 and every area that has been affected. This life-saving information cannot be kept secret. Faurecia must make available to workers a total count of positive and potential COVID-19 cases, and the list must be kept up to date every hour on the hour.

3. Universal testing must be conducted at the highest standard and maintained under the direct supervision of the rank and file in consultation with medical professionals at the company's expense. The testing procedures cannot be left up to the company to take short cuts and then be abandoned at the first opportunity. The WOW Clinic is a sham. We cannot permit the same methods to be employed for COVID-19.

4. 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.

5. Social distancing must be maintained at all times—at workstations, when entering and leaving the plant and during bathroom, lunch and other break times. If social distancing is impossible at some workstations, they should either be redesigned, or the plant should be closed, with full compensation for all workers.

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

7. Open the books! It has been reported that Faurecia received public funds as part of the CARES Act in order to operate as an essential equipment producer during the industry-wide shut down during March, April and May. At the same time the company is forcing us to work 12 hours a day while at the same time cutting the pay of supervisors by 10%. We demand to see the accounts of all of those funds showing how they were disbursed. All workers who have not received hazard pay to which they are entitled must be reimbursed in full with interest.

We organized this committee in August as part of the national network of rank-and-file safety committees at auto plants and school districts. We have repeatedly warned our brothers and sisters of the dangers we face while spelling out measures we must implement to stop the spread of the disease.

If you agree with these demands and want to join the fight to enforce them throughout the industry and worldwide, if you oppose the homicidal herd immunity policy, join us.

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:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site