

Stellantis refused to evacuate Jeep plant in Toledo in spite of bomb threat

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Workers at the Toledo North Assembly Complex are outraged over the failure of Stellantis management to evacuate the plant or even warn workers in the wake of a bomb threat Monday night.

Police were summoned to the complex, which builds several Jeep models, including the Cherokee and Wrangler, after management reported a message spotted on a men's bathroom stall indicating a bomb might be planted at the facility. A search involving a police canine unit did not turn up an explosive device.

In response to an inquiry from a local Toledo TV station, management provided the following statement: "Stellantis confirms that a bomb threat was found in the Toledo South Assembly Plant tonight. The Toledo Police Department is on scene and conducting a search of the premises out of an abundance of caution."

Workers said they only learned about the threat after receiving worried calls from friends and relatives. At no point did management or officials from the United Auto Workers inform workers of the threat. The UAW predictably has not issued any statements on the incident.

The clear contempt manifested by Stellantis management for the lives of their workforce evoked dozens of angry posts on Facebook.

One worker wrote, "No evacuation is just ridiculous to me. Empty threat or not we have families to go home to and this should have been taken seriously!!!!"

A worker asked, "Why was the news notified of this threat, before employees? They kept the employees working and in the dark. Employees heard about it from concerned family members and word of mouth throughout the plant."

Another said, "So how does that work, police looking for a bomb(s) while the line is still operating? Nope, nothing can stop production even if other new vehicles

are waiting for a computer chip ..."

A worker indicated there was even a significant delay in summoning police. "The fact [is] that they care more about how many cars come off the line than they do about their employees lives. They never even told us anything about it. Nor did they evacuate. They waited like 2 hours before the police were even here."

A veteran worker at the plant spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* about the incident and the broader issues it raises.

"It was around 10 p.m. No one knew except from Facebook. They don't care about workers' safety. There have been other incidents before. They had a shooting in 2005, for example.

"They said [they had police search the facility] 'out of an abundance of caution.' To me 'an abundance of caution' is get the people out of the plant and carry out a thorough search. There are so many places to hide a bomb in that plant. In ceiling spaces, in lockers ... They don't want to do that, because it is a lot of money (to stop production). They don't care, because they got their vehicles out.

"If you get blown up, just keep the line going. Don't use that bathroom. It feels like we are working in the Third World. The company can do what it wants. The UAW has no backbone whatsoever. We are being extorted. We pay them two and a half hours a month to work there."

The refusal of Stellantis management to evacuate the plant or even inform workers of the danger marks a new low in terms of its utter disregard for human life. In the past, such threats have normally led to a plant evacuation, as at Mobis North American, part of the Jeep complex, in January 2020.

The reaction to the bomb threat is merely one indication of the subordination of all considerations for

workers' health and safety to the profit drive by management. It follows by days the decision by management, in league with the UAW, to remove masking requirements at auto plants, although this decision was reversed at GM's Wentzville plant near St. Louis. This takes place as the highly dangerous Delta variant of COVID-19 is surging in many areas.

During the pandemic, Stellantis and other automakers forced workers to stay on the job even as infections and deaths spread unchecked. Only when workers at Toledo Jeep and other plants in North America and Europe carried out wildcat strikes in protest did the auto companies agree to temporary shutdowns.

Once production resumed, management, in collusion with the UAW, flouted even token safety protocols it had put in place and failed to inform workers of COVID-19 infections or even deaths in the auto plants.

The worker added, "The company is making record profits, even with all the materials they bought for COVID.

"Companies are policing themselves. If they investigate themselves of course they are going to find no wrongdoing. Then the UAW will say 'the company is fine.' It is clear they don't give a s---."

In keeping production going during the bomb scare, management stooped to the use of threats.

The worker said, "Someone was told last night if they left they would be fired, because they are a TPT (temporary part time) or SE (supplemental employee). That is wrong.

"Everyone who was there last night has a legitimate gripe, that they weren't told by the company and given the option to leave. The director of security apparently decided it was safe to stay at work. We had multiple people die in the plant in 2005 in a shooting, so how can you say someone can't figure out how to make a pipe bomb? That shows they just don't care.

"This is a company that can catch you smoking weed in your car on video, but cannot catch car thieves. We cannot get information if our own car is being damaged. You have to get a court order or subpoena."

He said he had been following the stand taken by Volvo workers in Virginia in defiance of both management and the UAW and the support they had received nationally and internationally. "We need more workers (like the Volvo workers in Belgium) to step up for each other. We are in a global economy. We have to

think not just on a personal scale, not just a local scale, but a global scale."

This latest incident further underscores the importance of the call by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the *Autoworker Newsletter* for the formation of rank-and-file safety committees, independent of the pro-company UAW, to oversee the safeguarding of workers' health and safety.



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