

Mack Trucks workers: We must defend ourselves from the corporate effort to sacrifice us for profit!

Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee
12 January 2022

The following statement was drafted and approved by the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee at Mack Trucks. To contact or join the committee, text them at 717-739-9517. Alternatively, workers can fill out the form at the bottom of this statement.

Dear Mack Trucks coworkers,

We are currently being forced into a third year of working with a deadly virus in our workplace. Officially, over 5.48 million people have died worldwide, with over 836,000 in the United States.

Hospitals everywhere are exceeding capacity. Nurses, doctors, and pharmacists are being pushed beyond their limits. The Center for Disease Control, flagrantly bowing to corporate interests, has lowed the guidelines for quarantining in workplaces from 10 to five days. The same CDC has estimated that anywhere from 19,700 to 30,500 deaths will occur in America during this month alone.

Between 1,500 and 1,600 people died when the Titanic collided with an iceberg and sank in 1912. Afterwards, major safety reforms were initiated in the international shipping industry, including the provision of adequate numbers of lifeboats, to make sure such a disaster could never happen again. But while about as many people die *every day* in the United States alone from COVID as the number that died in the most infamous shipwreck in history, the policy of the corporate elite is to declare that we must learn to 'live with' the virus.

What does this even mean? This disaster of epic proportions will only get worse if we do nothing to stop it. But we, as workers, can and must prevent this.

We have also seen tragedy at Mack Trucks. Two workers, Dan Schaefer and Bob Lehr, died under

unexplained circumstances this past fall. A third one of our fellow coworkers at Mack, William Dimitrovitsch, known as 'Willie Dee' to his coworkers and friends, was confirmed to have died due to COVID-19, on December 15, 2021. His job was in the engine room, loading engines onto the engine line on second shift. His passion was for the outdoors and he and his son were caretakers for his elderly mother.

Willie Dee was a good coworker and valued friend that will be sorely missed. We will neither forgive nor forget Mack Trucks and the United Auto Workers' negligence leading up to him catching this sickness. We will remember Willie Dee.

Cases have been piling up at Mack while the executives sit silently on the numbers until there are too many to keep quiet. The last four Mack texts announced an additional 24, 27, 24, and 82 cases respectively.

What gets lost in these statistics is Willie Dee's death and others like him. Did Mack report them? No. Mack concealed them. His death lies somewhere in the "recovered" or "active" cases list according to Mack and the UAW.

Mack and the United Auto Workers have no interest in protecting our safety. We must therefore fight to keep ourselves safe. Real solidarity means organizing ourselves to oppose both management and the treacherous UAW, which cancels meetings and effectively locks its own doors and turns out the lights as COVID-19 ravages our workplace.

The union representatives are keeping us, all of whom are potentially exposed to COVID every day in the plants, at a distance to protect their own health and safety. We reiterate what we said in August. If we

cannot work safely in the workplace then we should not be in the workplace at all!

What drives this murderous operation should be obvious to all of us: the drive for profits. You can see the desperation of the bosses to keep that line running. You can see executives' desperation to raise the rate on the line even though we do not have the staffing to do so.

The numbers back this up. *WFMZ* reported "Mack's order intake increased 181% to 13,583 from 4,840 in the third quarter of 2020. Order intake for the first nine months was 30,801, an increase of 167% from 11,557 orders in 2020." Mack gets money every time an order is placed. They get the rest upon completion. Their goal has always been to chase that dollar, never operating with our safety in mind, other than on paper.

Our collective strength is very powerful. When mobilized worldwide and behind a common strategy, it is almost invincible. The strike last summer by our brothers and sisters at Volvo Trucks' New River Valley Plant in Virginia had international repercussions, increasing the mood for walkouts everywhere. Only days after they learned that their American coworkers were on strike, Volvo Cars workers walked out in Ghent, Belgium in a wildcat action against a proposed increase to their workweek. The strike caused a severe crisis at Volvo, leading it to beg for additional labor from its regional headquarters to meet demands.

In the end, Volvo was saved by the UAW buckling on command, isolating striking workers and forcing them to re-vote on a contract they had already rejected. We supported the Volvo Trucks strike and wanted to join them, but instead the UAW forced us to handle scab-painted cabs.

In response, Volvo Trucks workers formed a rank-and-file committee at NRV to rally their coworkers to reject the trio of sellout contracts and bring Volvo to its knees. The same must be done everywhere.

The teachers in Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and New York City are seeking to mount a fight against the infection of the children that are their duty to protect in schools. We must stand in solidarity with these teachers not only for the childrens' protection, but theirs and ours as well.

Schools are the largest source of transmission of the virus in any workplace. The government must be forced to provide funds so teachers can teach remotely, so that

every child has access to the equipment needed to learn remotely and so a parent can be home with their children. Biden is lying when he says schools are as safe as anywhere else.

Many of us are tired of hearing about COVID-19. The capitalist owners are betting we will let them and the government's botching of the response to the virus off the hook in the name of getting back to "normal." If we let them have their way, what else are we willing to concede? The UAW and the company are betting we can't stand independently. This committee exists, however, because we believe we can and we are waiting for you to join up.

The Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee calls for:

- **Hazard pay in the form of double time if we are expected to work in a hazardous, potentially life-threatening environment.**
- **Personal protective equipment to be distributed by Mack, with the option of N-95 masks.**
- **10 minutes of break per hour to cool down from the heat of wearing the masks.**
- **Ventilation to assist in preserving a healthy workspace.**
- **Manning time allowances adjusted so that we can maintain six feet of working distance from each other. Mack Trucks violates its only guidelines when it tells workers to do otherwise and it is workers' right to stop working until you can do your job safely.**
- **The tripling of punch clocks to aid in maintaining safe distancing for workers entering and leaving the facility.**
- **A return of the break areas that were removed before and during the pandemic, including the outdoor break areas.**

Workers interested in building the committee should contact the rank-and-file committee or call 717-739-9517.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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