

# Two hundred autoworkers out due to COVID-19 at Ford's Louisville Assembly Plant

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*Are you an autoworker facing COVID outbreaks or other serious problems at your plant Contact the World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter at autoworkers@wsws.org.*

At least 200 workers are out due to COVID at Ford's Louisville Assembly Plant in Kentucky, a worker has informed the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. In order to protect his identity, his name and certain features of his job have been altered in the interview below.

Louisville Assembly Plant produces the Ford Escape and Lincoln MKC crossover SUV models, and is one of the largest industrial employers in Kentucky, with 4,722 hourly workers represented by United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 862. Louisville is a major regional industrial center, and also hosts Ford's Kentucky Truck Plant (KTP), with 8,620 hourly workers as well as the UPS Worldport air freight hub.

The ongoing spread of the Omicron variant in the US, a result of the homicidal government policies of allowing the virus to spread unchecked, has produced a catastrophe in the state. Kentucky, with a population of 4.5 million, recently reached the grim milestone of over one million total cases, with 12,687 deaths. On Friday, 15,864 new cases and 28 deaths were recorded in the state.

The virus has had a major impact on the auto plants, which are known hot spots for the transmission of COVID-19, along with schools and other workplaces. Infections and deaths among auto workers continue to climb. Meanwhile, the UAW works hand-in-hand with the corporations to keep the plants operational and cover up the true extent of the spread. The WSWs reported on the death of Caleb Mateo Dye, a 32-year-

old worker at Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant, who lost his life after a lengthy battle against the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

"I heard it from a supervisor that I had asked [that 200 people were out]," Daniel, a 20-year veteran of the company, said. "One day, we had to shut one line down, and the other line, where myself and others work, had to go to different areas because they had people out with COVID. They even had at least 50 people from KTP come over to our plant because we were so short."

When asked about the number of deaths, Daniel stated, "As of last month, there were maybe 15 people who passed, but I never found out what they died from."

Referring to the plant's safety protocols and procedures, Daniel commented, "In the beginning, our team leaders would go around every morning a half-hour before work with alcohol spray and wipes, and they would wipe our whole area down, our tools, and so on. Then Ford said, 'Well, we're spending too much money for these team leaders to come in and clean your area.' Instead, they told us that we have 'the choice' to come in on our own time to clean.

"I come in 20 minutes early with my own bottle of spray and disinfectant wipes, and I just wipe down the whole area because I don't know who was using my computer or tools, and I don't want to take the chance of them being contaminated." He added, "They say they supply the [cleaning] bottles, but each time you try to find a bottle, it's always empty, and when I go to my supervisor and ask for cleaning supplies, they tell me to go to my team leader, who then tells me to go back to my supervisor.

“As far as general safety is concerned, it isn’t a factor until somebody gets hurt, and then they’ll address it. The bathrooms are filthy. Every day we’re having to talk to a supervisor about overflowing toilets, or that there’s no soap in the dispensers.

“It’s gotten worse since the pandemic began, because a lot of the custodial workers are out with the virus, or were exposed to it.”

In response to the decades of betrayals carried out by the trade unions, and their transformation into corporatist syndicates whose primary purpose is to suppress opposition within the working class, the WSWs has been appealing to workers to begin forming independent rank-and-file committees.

“I agree, because talking to the union is a dead-end,” said Daniel. “They just throw their hands up. You have people catching COVID and nothing is being done as a safety measure to keep any more people from catching it.

“For example, a coworker who works next to me was suddenly off for a week, and I found out he caught the virus. I wasn’t even informed. When I talked to my committee representative, they said that they took all the safety measures, checked his area, checked who he sat and ate lunch with and said they were all okay.

“So, I think a separate committee or a safety group should be formed outside of the union to follow up to make sure there’s better protocols for the workers. Ford doesn’t care, and the union isn’t backing up the workers.”



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