

# GM workers in Silao, Mexico speak out after co-worker loses his leg

Andrea Lobo  
7 October 2022

On Monday, October 3, Jose Daniel Tejas Muños, a 30-year-old worker at the General Motors Silao Complex in central Mexico, suffered a horrible accident in the paint department, where the unit conveyor amputated his leg.

Based on reports from workers, local media reported that, as the medical team was working to stop the bleeding and as Daniel was undergoing excruciating pain, management showed up to look for ways to cover up the incident.

However, the news and pictures leaked by workers soon went viral and touched a nerve. “This could happen to any of us,” “it will change his life and that of his family forever,” “he will simply get replaced by the company” are common among the thousands of comments by workers online.

Deeply stirred, active and former workers of the Silao plant reached out to the *World Socialist Web Site* to register their anger, describe safety concerns, and condemn the new and so-called independent union (SINTTIA) for its bankrupt response.

Daniel had already lost a hand in the same job and, while he was reportedly standing in an area marked as “entrapment zone,” co-workers stressed that this is not an isolated incident and reflects the lack of safety measures and inhuman pressures workers face. The incident took place shortly before the end of his 12-hour shift.

Sergio, a former worker in the paint department with 26 years experience who was fired in 2020 for quarantining after contracting COVID-19, explained: “There is a record of accidents for leg entrapment in that area. It’s a red zone, but the company has really never done anything about it. It’s a serious accident since the fellow worker lost his leg above the knee. In fact, before I was fired, an inspection worker had an

accident. Thank God she managed to take her foot out, but the conveyor swallowed her shoe.” Sergio concluded, “It’s a tragedy for the worker and his family.”

Workers at the plant also informed the WSWs that accidents increased after the implementation of the 12-hour shifts, including one worker who lost an eye while assembling dashboards.

Arturo, a former worker with 23 years experience in repairs, paint and assembly at GM Silao, said: “It could have been exhaustion because of the 12-hour shifts and also fear of pulling the Andon to ask for help and stopping the line because he had moved beyond his work area and into a critical area.”

Fernando, another former worker with 23 years experience at the plant, indicated: “This is an example of when there is no follow-up regarding unsafe conditions. What needs to happen before unsafe conditions improve? ... Until the worst happens.”

An active worker in the [*bastidores*] chassis assembly area explained: “The company makes you do something unsafe and, if an accident happens, it says on a tangent ‘Why were you doing that?’ They want you to blame yourself.” In this way, he said, GM distributed a statement on Daniel’s accident that “implied that he was in an inappropriate area. The company can’t cop out like that. Do you think we want such a thing to happen to us?”

He added: “The company slogan that ‘Safety is our number one priority’ is false. Production is their number one priority. It’s a business. Sometimes the machines break down, and workers must carry large parts and hurt themselves. They [management] don’t want to stop the line. They claim that we can raise our hand and stop the line, but that is a lie.”

The worker shared videos

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbZ5zkL3OyU>] of misplaced rubber mats and workers being compelled to carry exhaust pipes. “These are a bit tricky and can fall on one’s foot and sometimes have sharp edges, or they could hit someone else. A bit farther ahead from where I work, due to the haste of sometimes being behind schedule, a co-worker dropped a suspension system with the machine and smashed another worker, whose finger was all black. That worker needed three weeks [to recover].”

He also noted that on Monday, the same day as Daniel’s accident, a worker in final assembly fell down. “The mats are in a terrible state. There are many things that are wrong, and they [management] don’t care,” he stressed. In fact, several Silao workers complained on social media that Daniel’s working area did not even have rubber mats.

The worker also complained that management has allowed COVID-19 to run rampant since the beginning of the pandemic. After his wife caught COVID at the plant, he was compelled to return to work after his two days off. “They didn’t care whether I might have the virus and could infect my co-workers,” he said. He explained that while masks are still mandatory, social distancing is impossible.

Just during 2020, workers reported to the WSWs that at least 13 GM workers died due to COVID-19, including one who was working so sick that he died in the plant.

The union SINTTIA, which was sponsored and trained by the AFL-CIO and the US government to replace the discredited Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) union, responded to the incident merely by vowing to complain to the Labor Ministry which workers saw as a cover for doing nothing.

A text message of a paint shop worker shared with the WSWs stated: “It’s embarrassing that we have an independent union, but, at a most difficult moment like that on Monday, no union representative showed up to the paint area to find out what had happened and how to help the injured worker in every way possible.”

Another former GM Silao worker said to this reporter: “I swear I feel so angry and powerless because they cop out so easily, and to think that the change that was promised was to improve serious situations like this in the workplace.”

The chassis assembly worker commented that he had

asked the union to intervene when a team leader prevented him from going to get a drink of water or go to the restroom for arriving a few minutes late. “It was torture because we were in the hot season,” he said. No union official showed up that time, and on two other occasions when he needed their support, “they always sided with the company.”

The lack of safety for workers is a global phenomenon, with the International Labor Organization estimating 1.9 million deaths yearly from work-related accidents or illnesses. These figures do not include the more than 20 million excess deaths globally and over 800,000 just in Mexico caused by the criminal “let it rip” policy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under capitalism, all social concerns are subordinated to the accumulation of wealth of the corporate and financial oligarchy, which feasts on a pile of workers’ corpses, limbs, sweat and grief.

In order to stop the carnage, workers need to form organizations of their own—rank-and-file committees—to guarantee their right to a safe workplace, including by setting production speeds and shutting down the line or the plant if workers deem that conditions are unsafe.

Ultimately, this fight poses the need for uniting workers internationally to take democratic control over the global economy to meet social needs and not private profit.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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