

Dana worker says he became homeless after being fired on pretense

Kathleen Martin
21 March 2023

If you are a fired Dana worker, or if you would like to join the rank-and-file committee to fight against the mass firings, text or call the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter at 248-602-0936 today.

Montel Mickles, a 33-year-old fired Dana worker, started working at the Driveline plant in Toledo in August 2022. He began as a full-time worker, hired in directly through the company, and worked on the 600 line producing axles for Broncos.

“When I first started at Dana, I actually told a lot of my friends that I worked with at a previous factory to come to Dana. We were working eight hours, we could sign up for overtime, coworkers were mostly friendly, and I really loved when we formed the LGBTQ committee at Dana that I was a part of. I was even a board member of the committee. But around New Years’ everything did a 360 and it started changing.”

Mickles says he was wrongfully terminated and was evicted from his apartment as a result. He still does not know if the UAW even filed a grievance on his behalf, and has not been able to get in touch with his UAW representative. Since his firing, his life has been turned completely upside down.

“I lost my apartment,” he said. Mickles got behind on bills when he was not allowed to pick up extra hours at work. “So, I fell behind on rent, and then when they fired me, my landlord just went ahead and did the whole eviction. We went to court March 2 for the eviction and I had to be out by March 8.”

“Right now I currently live in a homeless shelter in downtown Toledo. I have a storage unit where I put all my furniture and the majority of my clothes. The shelter I live in is actually very nasty. It’s infested with bedbugs, it’s horrible. I just can’t wait to get outta here. It’s depressing. That whole first day at the shelter I just sat around crying because I just couldn’t believe

that I was down here. I went from having a job that I really liked to being homeless in a matter of less than a month. It’s crazy.”

Mickles described the circumstances leading up to his termination. The company began escalating antagonisms against workers, he says, including write-ups and firings over arbitrary issues like headphone use. “They claimed it was for safety, but that doesn’t even make sense because a lot of the injuries that I saw were occurring on conveyor belts—things like people’s hands or hair getting caught in the belt, which have nothing to do with headphones,” Mickles said.

Mickles says he had not been written up for any reason during the entirety of his time at Dana. He said he once even volunteered to clean the bathrooms and break room when the janitorial staff was out sick, to be helpful. “Dana does not care,” he said. “They want you to be there all the time, on their time. They don’t care about peoples’ outside life.”

Mickles’ mother has Type 2 diabetes and went into a diabetic coma on February 28. “She went to the hospital and I didn’t find out about it until March 1. I went to work that day. The next day the doctor called, which was March 2, and said, ‘Hey, can you come up here? We need to have a meeting because your mom is not doing too good.’”

“So I said sure. I got up at 10 in the morning to call Dana’s call-in line, so they had a lot of time for them to get my notice.” Dana’s call-in line is notoriously faulty and often cited by the company as a legitimate reason to terminate employment for workers who try to call in when they cannot make it to work. Mickles used an “emergency vacation day” to be able to visit his mother in the hospital and had a supervisor sign off on it.

Mickles thought that Dana’s time-off policy meant he would get the rest of the weekend off for the vacation

day on Friday. However, this is only for scheduled vacation days. There is little education from the UAW on the specifics of the contract negotiated in 2021. “On Monday, I called them because I had other stuff to do—I had a doctor’s appointment for my own general health and some other things. When I went back to work Tuesday, my badge wasn’t working. I called HR and they said, ‘Yeah, you were terminated. You did three no-call, no-shows.’”

Mickles tried to explain that he had received a confirmation number to be able to use an emergency vacation day on Friday and that it was approved by his supervisor. “My supervisor approved my emergency vacation day, he gave me the copy back and everything. And now there’s no record of approval or they don’t even have a record of the vacation paper at all. I would’ve never took two days off without him approving a vacation day.”

He then attempted to set up a meeting with HR to challenge his firing after they claimed they were looking for his emergency vacation approval paperwork that was signed by his supervisor. However, HR was out of the office for a week. “There was some type of threat to HR from a former employee apparently. Workers were told to come in, but HR was allowed to work at home. So there’s no way that they could have been looking for my vacation approval paper when they weren’t even in the office,” he said.

By March 7, Mickles attempted contact with his union rep to tell them he got fired over the supposed no-call, no-show. He sent the confirmation number as evidence and let the union know he was still trying to locate his vacation paper, and that HR was no assistance. “She never responded back,” Mickles said, referring to the UAW representative. “I called her, didn’t hear nothing back, text her, still nothing. Apparently she told my friend that the UAW chairman was filing a grievance and that she was going to call me Monday. That was on a Friday, and here we are weeks later and still nothing.”

Dozens of Dana workers say they have been wrongfully terminated in recent months, including at the company’s plants in Toledo and Dry Ridge, Kentucky. The Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee has organized a fight against wrongful terminations and encourages all workers to read their founding statement here.

If you are a fired Dana worker, or if you would like to join the rank-and-file committee to fight against the mass firings, text or call the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter at 248-602-0936 today.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact