

# Alliance Interiors fire in Lansing, Michigan once again exposes unsafe conditions at the plant where a young worker was crushed in April

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Wednesday night a fire broke out at the Alliance Interiors plant in Lansing, Michigan. According to workers the machine that caught fire ran loose fiber that had built up over time under the oven. Since it had not been cleaned, the fiber caught fire. For over a week management ignored warnings of the possibility of a fire. According to many workers that contacted the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* the fire began sometime before 10pm. By morning the next shift was back at work. As of this writing no injuries have been reported.

“We were back up by [day shift],” a production worker said. “In my point of view, they are pushing too much at one time. Parts are down and the machines are not getting R&R where they should be. They just put a band-aid on it. Maintenance [workers] would be happy to fix it, instead of running it. I agree that [GM] is pushing production over health and safety. The supervisors say, ‘it’s running good,’ while we’re behind. If we had our own team, we would run efficiently.”

The worker reported high turnover due to the conditions in the plant. “people don’t last after two days,” he noted.

Just two months ago the plant saw the death of a young worker, Pablo Herrera Jr., who was killed on the job. Workers blamed faulty machinery.

Workers from GM Lansing took to social media in support of their brothers and sisters at Alliance, which produces acoustic parts and floor covers for General Motors’ Lansing Delta Assembly Plant. “I have a friend that works first shift there and she said they are working right now. Not sure how, that fire looked

really bad.”

Other workers described the direct link with parts plants and the assembly plants. “We didn’t run until after first break today because of it.” Another worker stated, “I’m sure there is some pressure from GM for them to work regardless of the health and safety of their workers!” “They had body running a little two hours after a fire, they want their parts, they don’t care about health and safety!”

A supporter of the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* from the Lansing area witnessed the fire. “I received a text before 10pm last night about the fire and got to the plant at 10:15pm. There were a lot of fire trucks, they would use one hydrant then move to another. I saw the supervisors talking around 11:30pm, calling for a headcount. They called a headcount at 11:30! That is at least an hour and half after I got there, meanwhile the fire is still going.”

“One worker said it was his sixth day there and he didn’t know how to get out of the building. On day one the company is supposed to show you that. People said they barely heard the alarm or were told to ignore it since the company messes with the alarms regularly.

“They [management] don’t know who the workers are, they called me over as part of the headcount. Then they had temps gathering people. They took over an hour and a half to gather people, someone else could have died. Many of us stayed well after 12:30 am and workers were still coming out of the parking lot. None of the doors were closed off, but were wide open with smoke and people coming out of the building. I was shocked by this ‘headcount.’ One worker said the

supervisors were nervous when they came in for third shift. Now I hear they are up and running with a big hole in the ceiling; doesn't make it safe."

As of this writing no news source, union official, national or local, has made any statement on the fire. Nor has any official statement been issued on the death of Pablo Herrera Jr. in April. Herrera was killed after being caught between a conveyor and a vacuum forming mold

In contrast, residents in the area posted videos and comments against the criminality of the company in the death of the young worker. One person stated, "Trying not to pay the people they should be paying! Justice for Pablo Herrera Jr." "They need to shut it down."

While millions throughout the Midwest and East Coast were under air quality alerts due to the wildfires raging across Canada, workers were told to continue working despite the serious health risks. Workers from GM Flint and Ford Dearborn Truck reported "being smothered in smoke" and many were having asthma attacks with their eyes burning from the smoke. In Lansing alone, the air quality index exceeded 213 and is regularly above 110.

A GM Lansing Delta Assembly worker reported the building air being hazy from smoke throughout the week. As with the failure to protect workers against hazardous air quality, the fire at Alliance directly points more broadly to the indifference of the ruling class and their toadies in the union bureaucracy towards workers' lives.

Predictably the response by newly elected UAW president Shawn Fain to the fire at Alliance Interiors and the smoke emergency has been silence. This follows the UAW bureaucracy's betrayal of the Clarios battery workers 40-day strike in Holland, Ohio. Fain falsely claimed the workers won "massive gains," when in fact the contract was the same pro-company deal that workers twice previously had voted down. Like workers at Clarios, Alliance workers face mandated 8-to-12-hour shifts, 7 days a week.

After the death of the Pablo Herrera Jr., the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* called upon Alliance Interiors workers and auto parts worker in the surrounding area to build rank-and-file committees at each plant and workplace, as part of the network of autoworkers rank-and-file committees. In the wake of the recent fires the demands raised in relation to

Herrera's death should be restated:

- A full investigation of Pablo Herrera's death, led by trusted rank and file workers. No confidence should be placed in the UAW bureaucracy, management or MIOSHA, which hands out minimal fines while the companies continue to profit as workers lives are cut short.

- No worker should be ordered to work in unsafe conditions. All unsafe conditions should be communicated across the shop floor, and the line should be stopped until resolved.

- An end to 7-day mandates and extended 8- to 12-hour shifts

- Full training and job security for workers, and hiring and firing only conducted by the supervision of the rank and file.

Alliance workers have to connect to their brothers and sisters at GM Lansing and GM Flint and workers internationally. GM workers, like workers at Alliance, are up against not only management with the contract expiration this fall, but also the UAW bureaucracy and the Biden administration in their fight against job and wage cuts, destruction of social conditions and the drive to war.



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