

# Global automakers in US and Europe slashing thousands more jobs

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Thousands of autoworkers in the United States and other countries will be thrown out of work in coming weeks as Stellantis, Ford and other global companies lead an accelerating wave of job cuts across the world economy.

In Toledo, Ohio, as many as 1,225 Stellantis workers—or nearly a quarter of the workforce at the giant Jeep-manufacturing complex—are scheduled to be laid off starting February 5. Another 2,455 workers will also be laid off at the Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack plant. The company says the production of Jeep Cherokees at the plant will “temporarily” be reduced from three to two shifts, but there have been repeated threats to eliminate the third shift.

Earlier this month, 539 supplemental (temporary) employees at Stellantis plants in Detroit and Kokomo, Indiana were fired, and United Auto Workers officials say another 1,600 SEs face the same fate in the next few months, if not sooner. The UAW told these workers they would be rolled over to full-time positions once the new labor agreements were ratified, now they are being fired.

The world’s third largest automaker is also carrying out 600 job cuts at its Mulhouse plant in eastern France, largely affecting contract workers. Another 2,250 Stellantis workers will be temporarily laid off at its Mirafiori plant in Turin, Italy, between February 12 and March 3.

Ford began laying off 100 workers at the Chicago Assembly Plant this week, with 25 of the lowest seniority workers told not to report to work on Monday. According to UAW Local 551, the layoffs are for three months with the tentative return date on April 29.

In addition, Ford is cutting two-thirds of the jobs at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center (REVC) in Dearborn,

Michigan, forcing 1,500 workers to transfer to other facilities or take “voluntary” retirements. Production of the F-150 Lightning pickup truck at the facility is being reduced to just one shift.

At the beginning of the month, General Motors laid off 1,300 workers in Michigan. This included 945 workers at its Orion Assembly plant, north of Detroit, where production of the Chevrolet Bolt is being wound down and retooling to manufacture electric trucks has been delayed until 2025. Another 369 GM workers are being laid off at the Lansing Grand River plant with the ending of Camaro production in December 2023.

The job cutting occurs just months after UAW President Shawn Fain claimed the union had won “record” contracts from the Big Three automakers that “saved” plants and would add jobs. In fact, the UAW-backed deals have paved the way for a massive attack on jobs as the automakers transition to electric vehicles and slash jobs and labor costs to gain a competitive edge in what Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares recently called a “bloodbath.”

After collaborating with the Biden administration to push through the job-cutting deals, the UAW apparatus endorsed the Democratic president, locking arms with the administration’s program of expanding war abroad and class war at home.

At the Toledo Assembly Complex, UAW Local 12 officials have kept workers completely in the dark about the next month’s layoffs. In the run up to the contract ratification, local union officials claimed a third shift and new jobs would be added, and all 1,100 supplementals would get permanent jobs. But Stellantis agreed to convert only 900 supplementals at the plant and they will be among the first laid off. Rather than fighting the job cuts, UAW officials are pushing for “rolling” two-month layoffs, which would allow the company to lay off higher paid senior workers first.

“The union isn’t telling us anything,” Alice, a supplemental worker at the plant for nearly four years told the WSWS. “I’ve filled out the paperwork to get rolled over to full time, but nobody knows who’s going to get it. There are workers here who have been temps for six or seven years.

“These layoffs have got me stressed out; I might be looking for another job in a few weeks. The union told us we would be rolled over with the new contract but there was a lot of hidden words in the deals. I don’t trust the union anymore. The strike was phony. We were on the picket line for six weeks while the other plants were working.

“Nothing has changed. A worker right next to me is bringing home a weekly check of \$1,300 and I’m getting \$700 for doing the same thing. Now, we’re being laid off and the UAW expects us to keep paying dues, even though they never had our backs. It’s like this on every job. Workers all over the world are busting our butts for nothing and everybody is tired of it.”

“You have these people who have all the money and they are wiping us out,” a recently fired SE at the Indiana Transmission Plant in Kokomo told the WSWS. “They are slithering snakes and I don’t trust any of them,” she said of the company, the UAW apparatus and Biden.

Rank-and-file supplemental workers are fighting to be reinstated with full back pay. Many attended a January 21 emergency meeting sponsored by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to organize a fight, independent of the apparatuses that control the UAW and other unions.

In Kokomo, Stellantis is also planning to close its Tipton Transmission plant, in the first of what could be a wave of plant closures and mass layoffs at transmissions plants in the area as the company begins to buy propulsion systems from Hyundai Transys, Inc., an auto parts subsidiary of South Korea’s Hyundai Motor Group. BorgWarner, a major transmission supplier, closed its Kokomo facility earlier this month, permanently laying off the remaining 94 workers at the plant.

Facing competition from lower priced Tesla and Chinese manufacturers, Swedish EV manufacturer Polestar announced plans to cut 450 jobs globally, or about 15 percent of its total workforce.

In Canada, parts suppliers are also being hit by retooling for EV production. Martinrea International closed its Fabco Metallic plant in Dresden, Ontario earlier this month, after Stellantis ended production of a previous model of the Jeep Grand Cherokee in Detroit and ended

output of the Chrysler 300, Dodge Charger and Dodge Challenger in Brampton, Ontario in December, according to *Automotive News Canada*.

“This whole place is closing,” Brian Gittens, who worked at the plant for 23 years told the *Chatham News*, “and there’s nobody here fighting for our jobs or fighting to see if there are other opportunities.” Workers at the plant are ostensibly “represented” by the Unifor union, which also rammed through sellout deals with the Big Three automakers last year.

In Germany, tens of thousands of jobs are being slashed at VW, Bosch, Continental, ZF and other auto and auto parts suppliers, with the full complicity of the IG Metall union apparatus.

In addition to the auto industry, mass layoffs are spreading throughout every sector of the US economy. Job cuts are sweeping through newsrooms, including the *Los Angeles Times* (115 journalists,) *Business Insider*, *Time*, and *Sports Illustrated*, which is laying off all 100 employees and moving to shut down. Staffers at the *New York Daily News* and *Forbes* walked out last week to oppose impending cuts.

In the first four weeks of 2024, nearly 25,000 tech workers were laid off, according to layoffs.fyi, at Meta, Amazon, Microsoft, Google, TikTok, Salesforce and scores of other companies. This follows the slashing of 260,000 tech jobs last year, the worst since the dot-com bubble burst in the early 2000s. Ebay announced it will slash another 1,000 jobs this year, after cutting 500 in 2023.

“There is a herding effect in tech,” Jeff Shulman, a professor at the University of Washington’s Foster School of Business, told NPR. “The layoffs seem to be helping their stock prices, so these companies see no reason to stop ... it’s the new normal.”



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