

# Stellantis Warren Stamping workers approve strike over health and safety

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Workers at Stellantis' Warren Stamping Plant in suburban Detroit voted by 72 percent Monday to authorize a strike over health and safety grievances.

The UAW stressed that the vote does not mean the union will actually call a strike and that talks are ongoing with management. The union did not release a detailed vote breakdown or say what percentage of workers participated.

In a video posted on the UAW website, Local 869 President Lorraine McKinney III said the local has 150 outstanding grievances: "We have a plethora of things that need to be taken care of at Warren Stamping. roof leaks, not having gloves, not being able to work with a partner."

One worker said, "The fans don't work. When it is 95 degrees outside it is about 100 in the plant. Our basement is in horrible condition; a lot of oil and water. People are down there working... Our hi-los are in horrible condition. The gears are taped up"

The Local 869 UAW health and safety rep reported, "The bathrooms are messed up, the faucets aren't working."

According to the US Occupational Health and Safety Administration, Stellantis was fined \$60,000 in June 2023 for six serious safety violations at Warren Stamping, including failure to ensure "walking-working surfaces are maintained free of hazards such as sharp or protruding objects, loose boards, corrosion, leaks, spills, snow, and ice."

The *Detroit News* reports members of Local 869 voted to strike in early April over separate issues related to the expired local contract. Local contract agreements cover plant-specific issues that often relate to working conditions. The UAW has not issued any update on the local contract or if the issues are related to the strike vote over health and safety grievances.

In March, workers at the Stellantis Toledo Assembly complex decisively voted down a tentative local contract agreement recommended by the UAW. Workers at the factory, which builds Jeep-brand vehicles, have been forced onto a mandatory 10-hour, 7-day work schedule to make up production lost due to parts shortages.

Only months after a supposedly "historic" national contract which has actually paved the way for mass layoffs, the UAW apparatus is facing a rebellious and restive rank-and-file. Since the sellout, working conditions have deteriorated. Anger is still boiling among autoworkers over the mass terminations of temp workers and the continuing announcement of layoffs following ratification of the sellout deal that met none of workers' core demands.

This has not stopped the corporate media and the Biden administration from praising the national contract and heaping accolades on UAW President Shawn Fain.

Workers at Stellantis have been particularly hard hit by the cuts. There were 34 temporary or "supplemental" workers fired at Warren Stamping in January as part of the mass termination of some 2,000 supplementals companywide. These workers were forced onto the street after Fain claimed that they would be promoted to full time under the 2023 contract.

Speed-up and overwork due to layoffs have worsened the health and safety issues that already existed. One reflection of this was the recent tragic death of Tywaun Long, at the Ford Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan last month. Hundreds attended the funeral of the worker, who collapsed on the line and had to wait an agonizing 30 minutes for medical help.

Workers at Warren Stamping are in a powerful

position to fight for their demands. The factory produces critical parts for six Stellantis assembly plants that build the Dodge Durango, Chrysler Pacifica and Ram light and heavy-duty trucks as well as several Jeep-brand vehicles including the Wrangler and Cherokee.

The strike vote at Warren Stamping also comes as UAW Local 4811, covering 48,000 graduate student workers across California, set a strike vote for May 13-15 over the police crackdown on college campuses.

The fact the vote was called is an indication of powerful determination among the rank-and-file. But grad students are furious over the UAW's delay of a week before the start of the vote. They are also angered over the union officials' attempts to negotiate a deal to end the protests along the lines of the sellout of protesters at Northwestern University.

There is every indication that the UAW bureaucracy is doing the same at Warren Stamping. Local 869 has not outlined concrete demands it is submitting to management nor indicated a deadline for when a strike will take place.

The UAW bureaucracy is desperately maneuvering to keep in front of rank-and-file anger. But its combination of nominal "support" for a ceasefire with the closest ties to the White House and "Genocide Joe" Biden, as well as its combination of purely verbal rhetoric about union democracy with massive sellouts, is being threatened by the growing movement of the working class.

Last week, the the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees called on workers to organize industrial action in defense of the students. It declared, "The rank-and-file must take the initiative out of the hands of the bureaucrats. As they have in many contract battles, workers must form rank-and-file committees independent of the bureaucracy to prepare strike action. They should take over union meetings, or organize their own meetings, to demand that the unions sanction strikes."

This must be combined with the fight in defense of jobs and working conditions. The oversight of health and safety requires placing power in the hands of workers on the shop floor, including the right to refuse to work if conditions are deemed unsafe. This requires the building of rank-and-file committees, run democratically by workers themselves in every factory

and workplace, to enable workers to enforce their democratic will and countermand sellouts by the bureaucracy.



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