

Worker killed by falling equipment at Michigan stamping plant slated for closure

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A worker was killed while on the job at Dexter Stamping, a metal stamping company, just to the west of Jackson, Michigan, on July 15, 2024. The 36-year-old worker, a die-setter, was killed by a large and heavy die that fell while being transported by an overhead crane.

As of this writing, the worker's name has not been released, nor have there been any other news updates about the whole matter. The company has not commented on the death.

A report on the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) 2024 Fatality Information, which is derived from the employer's incident report, read:

On July 15, 2024, a 36-year-old die setter was transporting/lifting a die with a crane when the swivel bolt broke loose. As a result, one corner of the die hit the ground, causing the top half of the die to separate and crush the victim. According to the employer's incident report, the swivel bolt was not fully threaded into the die and came out of the hole.

The statement from the company seems to imply that there was some carelessness and negligence on the part of the worker himself, or perhaps another worker. Significantly, the MIOSHA report does not mention Dexter Stamping in its database.

The death occurred only days before the plant is due to close. Dexter Stamping Company announced on April 15 that it will cease operations and lay off all of their workers at that facility by July 31, 2024. In all, 66 employees will be laid-off.

Dexter Stamping, which has been in business since 1955, provides stampings and sub-assemblies for the automotive industry. It is part of a larger corporate entity, Dynamic Industrial Group, LLC, based in Elkhart, Indiana.

The company has a facility in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, which is not being shuttered. The owners claim that they are "world class," "go to," excellent and other such superlatives. They boast that they "have continued to grow while other suppliers have closed their doors."

According to state data, the death at Dexter Stamping was the 14th workplace fatality in Michigan so far this year. There were 36 workplace deaths in 2023, 45 deaths in 2022 and 54 deaths in 2021.

The death of a worker at Dexter Stamping in Michigan is a product of the disastrous health and safety conditions facing workers across the US. As reported by the AFL-CIO, in 2023, there were 5,190 workers killed on the job in the US. Deaths related to hazardous working conditions amounted to 343 per day. Another 120,000 died from occupational diseases.

According to a study by American Public Media (APM) Research Lab, fatal occupational injuries have surged since the economic downturn associated with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Traffic accidents cause most work-related deaths, but falls at the worksite, and workers' exposure to toxic substances, heavy machinery and physical violence are also major causes of what the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) refers to as 'fatal occupational injuries,'" reported the APM study.

The imminent shutdown of Dexter Stamping is part of the jobs massacre that has hit the automotive manufacturing sector associated with the transition from internal combustion engine (ICE) cars to electric

vehicles (EV). In the US, there have been 21,328 job cuts announced in the auto industry since the beginning of 2024, up 18 percent from the 18,017 cuts announced through May 2023, according to job placement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

Stellantis (formerly Fiat-Chrysler) announced 4,000 temporary layoffs at assembly facilities earlier this month and the company fired at least 2,300 temporary part-time workers or Supplemental Employees (SEs) earlier in the year. Stellantis also cut 2,453 full-time and SEs at the Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack and laid off hundreds of parts sequencing workers at the transmission complex in Kokomo, Indiana. In March Stellantis eliminated the jobs of 400 engineering and technology workers.

These layoffs and plant closures are part of a global assault on autoworker jobs with Ford Europe announcing 3,800 layoffs in June along with a new round of job cuts in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom.

A discussion on Facebook about the death of the Dexter Stamping worker elicited comments from people who said they were either current or former employees of Dexter Stamping. One commenter posted a photo from inside the plant and said, “Place is a mess in there.” Another worker said, “That’s why I left that filthy nasty place a while ago. Dam[n] shame.”

In another thread about the death, a worker wrote, “When I worked there I had a[n] accident due to my supervisors fault and I now have permanent damage to my right hand, supervisor even admitted fault and yet Dexter fired me WHILE on workman’s comp claiming, ‘they didn’t need as many temps anymore,’ I was the only one let go.”



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