

OSHA investigating work-related death at Tesla Gigafactory in Austin, Texas

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8 August 2024

Do you work at Tesla? The WSWS wants to hear from you. Tell us what your workplace conditions are like by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Federal investigators are looking into a death at the Tesla Gigafactory in Austin, Texas which occurred earlier this month. The Travis County Sheriff's Office and local paramedics were called to the plant on the morning of August 1 when a worker went into cardiac arrest.

More details are not yet known, including the identity of the worker, and OSHA has indicated its investigation will take up to six months. But there have been three other inspections at the Gigafactory in the past three years, with the last open case dating to July 5, 2024.

The death follows the layoff of 14,000 workers at Tesla around the world, as part of a global attack on jobs across the entire economy, but concentrated in the auto industry. The labor-saving potential of electric vehicles, combined with lower-than-expected initial sales, are the impulse for auto companies to slash whole sections of their workforces.

Following the layoff, Tesla CEO Elon Musk received a \$45 billion payout from the Tesla board, in an act of blatant social banditry. Musk's net worth is as of this writing \$218 billion, making him the richest person in human history. Musk is also a notorious ignoramus and right-winger, who has used his personal control of social media platform X (formerly Twitter) to provide neo-Nazis a forum. The promotion of these political forces is aimed at shielding his absurd wealth from the working class, much as Henry Ford did in when he promoted antisemitism in the early 20th century.

The massive facility spans 2,500 acres (10.12 square kilometers), making it one of the largest auto plants in the country. It produces Tesla's Model Y car, which

was the world's best selling car in 2023, and Tesla's most profitable model, as well as the less-popular Cybertruck. The plant is designed to employ as many as 20,000 workers and produce up to 375,000 vehicles per year.

Tesla has increased its market share of the auto industry by 25.4 percent between 2022 and 2023 according to Yahoo Finance. However, it still controls only 4.2 percent of the US auto market and an even smaller share of the global industry. Nevertheless, Tesla is by far the world's most valuable auto company by market capitalization, dwarfing companies with much larger operations like General Motors and Toyota. This massive overvaluation is due to speculative and parasitical behavior on Wall Street.

The company also receives Texas state tax breaks totaling around \$50.4 million, and \$14 million from the local government.

The plant only opened in 2022, but was dangerous even during construction. In 2021 construction worker Antelmo Ramírez died in 98 Fahrenheit (37 Celsius) heat.

In the same year, a robotic arm designed to grab and move freshly cast aluminum car parts pinned an engineer by his arm and back. A trail of blood was left on a chute for aluminum scrap metal after the engineer was released by a coworker. Despite this, and having an open wound on his left hand, the engineer received no time off.

OSHA violations for construction contractors included issues such as fake safety credentials, and the company has been cited by the US Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) for not giving proper pay and, in some cases, not paying workers at all. An attorney representing the contract workers at the plant told the *Daily Mail* later that

injuries are under-counted.

In its first year of operation, one out of every 21 workers was injured on the job. For 2023, this increased to one out of every 13 workers. According to the most recent iteration of OSHA's Injury Tracking Application [ITA] Summary Data report, in 2023 the Tesla Gigafactory in Austin racked up over 1,000 injuries.

The ITA Summary Data reports 1,049 injuries out of the 13,444 average annual employees of the plant. Only 8 other locations out of the 385,449 documented had more injuries, and one of these was another Tesla factory in Fremont, California, which ranked third with 2,149.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics there were 2,804,200 nonfatal injuries and illnesses in private industry in 2022, with an average of 2.8 million injuries per year in the nine-year period from 2014 to 2022. In 2022, 5,486 workers lost their lives in fatal work-related injuries, with this number constituting a 5.7 percent increase year-over-year. Texas saw 578 of these deaths.

That these deaths are allowed to happen is a function of the destruction of the trade unions in the US and around the world, which had once set the standards for safety in plants and which put pressure on non-unionized plants to prevent accidents or face potential unionization, but which now function as a corporate police force enforcing the brutal conditions that are endemic to America's industrial slaughterhouse.



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