

For killing worker in Texas factory, Tesla to pay fine of \$49,000, or what CEO Elon Musk makes in 8 seconds

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Tesla workers looking to expose working conditions: Contact the WSWS by filling out the form below. Your comments will be kept strictly anonymous.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a \$49,650 (€45,780) fine against Tesla for the August 1, 2024 death of journeyman electrician Victor Joe Gomez Sr. at its “Gigafactory” in Austin, Texas. The worker in question was electrocuted while working on a panel that was supposed to have not been energized.

The details in the OSHA reports make clear this was a foreseeable and preventable death, but it was made inevitable given the lack of safety measures at the plant. As of this writing, there is no indication that the citation has been contested, but the case status is still listed as “open.”

The fine amounts to less than a slap on the wrist for the world’s most valuable car company, with a market capitalization of nearly \$700 billion at this time. The fine is less than 0.0003 percent of the company’s \$17.45 (€16.09) billion in profit last year.

Financial news outlets estimate that Tesla CEO Elon Musk, the world’s richest person and open fascist who heads the infamous Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under the Trump administration, makes an income of \$6,420 (€5,920) per second, meaning he could pay off the fine in less than 8 seconds, the time it takes to put on his shoes.

While little is done to protect Tesla workers, in the first two months of 2024 Tesla paid \$500,000 for Musk’s personal security, and he reportedly travels with at least 20 bodyguards. The company also employs a number of private security firms to turn its factories into virtual fortresses with all entrances

guarded by gates, guards and a sophisticated array of AI security cameras, including systems, such as the Turing AI surveillance system used in parking lots in order to monitor workers in Tesla’s factory in Fremont, California, and likely many others.

Through his control of DOGE, Musk and Trump are declaring war on virtually every federal department which even slightly infringes on the profit-making of the corporate oligarchy, with layoffs already having taken place in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and other regulatory agencies. Trump’s pick for OSHA’s new director, David Keeling, was a former safety director at Amazon and UPS, both companies with appalling safety records.

Amazon, in particular, has pioneered the use of robotics and tracking systems to enforce speedup inside its fulfillment centers, where workers are also regularly denied workers’ comp after suffering injuries while trying to “make rate.” During Keeling’s tenure as head of safety compliance at Amazon, former Amazon worker Shannon Allen became homeless after suffering repeated injuries, in a case first reported by the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Amazon founder and Musk’s fellow oligarch Jeff Bezos has also emerged as a major supporter of the Trump administration.

Unsafe conditions at Tesla

The death of Victor Gomez Sr. follows two previous fines of \$7,000 each at Tesla’s Gigafactory for

violations, including exposing four workers to toxic, cancer-causing hexavalent chromium.

Gomez's family launched a lawsuit against Tesla and the contractor, Belcan Services LP, which is separate from the citation by OSHA.

The details were not released until Wednesday despite the citation being issued in late January.

According to OSHA, the incident took place in the South Expansion Building, the site of the new Tesla headquarters following Musk's decision to move out of California in opposition to limiting COVID-19 measures in 2020. Musk operated his Fremont, California, plant illegally during lockdowns without any consequences from the Democratic Party-controlled state government.

The fine total comes from three "serious" violations, viewable on OSHA's website here. The first violation was for working in close proximity to energized parts without wearing appropriate personal protective equipment, including for the "eyes, face, head, and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices, and protective shields and barriers." From the description provided, it would seem that Gomez Sr. was doing work which necessitated an arc-flash rated suit. Instead, he was given essentially nothing.

The second violation was for Tesla permitting work "in electric power circuits that were not protected against electric shock by de-energizing and grounding the circuits or effectively guarding the circuits by insulation or other means" and that Gomez was performing an inspection on an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) without it being de-energized.

The third citation stated:

Before work began the employer did not ascertain by inquiry or direct observation, or by instruments, whether any part of an energized electric power circuit, exposed or concealed, was so located that the performance of the work could bring a person, tool, or machine into physical or electrical contact with the energized electric power circuit. The employer did not post and maintain proper warning signs where such a circuit existed. The employer did not advise employees of the location of such lines, the hazards involved, and the protective

measures to be taken.

It adds that in the same building:

On or about August 1, 2024, and at times prior thereto, quality control employees were exposed to electrical hazards while performing tests and inspections on newly installed electrical equipment without prior hazard analysis, warning signs, and communication of safe work procedures.

Essentially, no safety measures, including such basic measures like Lock Out Tag Out (LOTO), were present. A worker at the plant told the WSWS that LOTO was loosely enforced and that the company should "enforce LOTO more and actually have a crew or a system to verify that LOTO is being properly done."

Tesla is one of the poster-children for workplace injuries. The Austin, Texas, plant had the eighth most injuries of any workplace in America, or roughly one injury for every 13 workers at the facility, according to OSHA's 2023 data, the latest available from the agency. The third-most dangerous plant, according to the same figures, was Tesla's plant in Fremont, California, which had 2,149 injuries.



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