

Stellantis worker crushed to death at Dundee, Michigan engine plant

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A 63-year-old skilled tradesman at the Stellantis engine plant in Dundee, Michigan was killed early Monday morning when he was crushed by a mechanical arm that pinned him against a conveyor on the assembly line. According to his co-workers, the victim of the tragic incident was Ronnie Adams, a Detroit resident.

A statement from the Monroe County Sheriff's office said deputies arrived at the plant around 1:25 a.m. and found the man "was seriously injured by a machine while working on the assembly line." Adams was taken to the St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor and was later pronounced dead.

"Our family is deeply saddened to announce the unexpected passing of my husband Ronald E. Adams Sr. [Ronnie Adams]," Shamenia Stewart-Adams posted. "Please keep us lifted in your prayers as we prepare for the days ahead of us. We will release more details when they become available."

Adams was a highly skilled worker who was previously an aircraft mechanic at Delta Airlines and its predecessor, Northwest Airlines, according to his Facebook page.

Adams was apparently part of a small crew of skilled trades and other workers retooling the factory and preparing to restart production later this year, according to United Auto Workers officials, who provided no further information about the deadly incident.

The Dundee Engine Complex is currently undergoing a \$150 million retooling to produce new engines and battery trays for gas-powered, battery powered electric and hybrid Jeep and Dodge brand vehicles.

Stellantis, whose stock value has plunged by two-thirds over the last year, is already facing production cutbacks in the US due to a shortage of engines from its Saltillo, Mexico plant, which will only worsen as the full force of

Trump's tariffs hit. It is not clear whether the company was cutting corners to finish the Dundee retooling and move up the launch of the already delayed new 1.6-liter, I-4 turbocharged engines for Dodge and Jeep vehicles.

"When you rush a retool, someone is going to get hurt," one of hundreds of production workers laid off for retooling told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "When I was there, we valued safety and repairmen had to lock out the machines before doing maintenance on them. This is very sad. I want to know what happened."

In March 2023, he said, some 400 of the 700 workers at the plant were laid off. "Some were lucky, but some of us have been out of work for more than two years. Some of us got shipped to other plants where we learned quickly that we didn't have enough seniority to keep working. I'm living off SUB pay, some unemployment benefits, and lots of dead-end jobs."

Referring to Trump's tariffs, he said, "We are all worried. All this talk about 'American made' makes the auto industry in the US look like a dying industry. I worried that after 15 years, I could be out of a job."

United Auto Workers Local 723 Vice President Chris Sharpe told the *Detroit News* that local and international UAW officials were at the plant Monday morning looking into the fatal accident. In a perfunctory statement, union officials said, "The UAW is extremely saddened by the loss of a fellow member of our union family at Dundee Engine last night. An investigation into this incident is now underway. We will share more once we understand what happened, but for now, we ask everyone to keep our member's family in their hearts and prayers."

Workers can place no confidence in any investigation by the UAW bureaucracy. Instead, they should organize a rank-and-file committee, made up of the most trusted and militant workers, to investigate every aspect of this tragedy, expose the truth, ban forced overtime and oversee safety conditions.

For decades, the UAW apparatus has collaborated with corporate management to boost production and profits at the expense of the lives and limbs of rank-and-file workers. The various “labor-management safety committees” and other schemes are completely subordinated to cost-cutting and speed up, enforced by every level of the UAW apparatus. This will only intensify as UAW President Shawn Fain collaborates with Trump’s trade war policies and plans to “reshore” production based on a ruthless attack on wages and working conditions.

Dundee workers have had a particularly bitter experience with such treachery. When the factory was opened in 2005-06, under a joint venture by Mitsubishi Motors Corporation, Hyundai Motor Company and DaimlerChrysler Corporation, known as Global Engine Manufacturing Alliance (GEMA), the UAW bureaucracy agreed to a separate, substandard contract from other Detroit Three automakers.

In 2010, 99 percent of the 400 workers at the plant voted to be part of the 2011 national contract covering Chrysler workers. Behind the scenes, however, local union officials enforced management’s “critical status” schedules of 12-hour, seven-day workweeks indefinitely.

In August 2012, Dundee workers voted by 73 percent to reject the UAW-backed local contract, which allowed the company to bypass language in the national contract that placed certain limits on forced overtime.

This was part of a growing rebellion of autoworkers against the two-tier wages the UAW agreed to as part of Obama’s 2009 bankruptcy restructuring. Far from calling a strike at the critical engine plant, the UAW forced workers to revote on the sellout contract with one International UAW official telling Dundee workers to “suck it up” and work forced overtime.

Today, it is virtually routine for skilled trades workers to labor up to 70 hours a week.

The disdain for workers’ health and lives was on full display as UAW officials worked with management to keep production going as the deadly COVID-19 virus spread through the factories. This forced Dundee workers to join the wave of March 2020 wildcat strikes by Stellantis workers in Toledo, Detroit, Windsor and other locations, which forced the two-month shutdown of the auto industry that saved countless lives.

A month before the 2023 labor agreement expired for 150,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers, UAW President Shawn Fain did nothing to stop the layoff of the entire Dundee workforce and other factories as a means of

intimidating workers. Collaborating with Biden, Fain then organized his bogus “Stand Up” strike, which resulted in a contract that paved the way for massive job cuts, job overloading and deadly factory conditions.

Adams is the second Stellantis worker in recent months whose life has been sacrificed to corporate profit. In August 2024, 53-year-old Antonio Gaston, who had been transferred from Belvidere, Illinois to the Toledo Jeep Complex was crushed to death on the Jeep Gladiator assembly line.

The UAW bureaucracy did nothing to expose the conditions that led to the death of the father of four because they were complicit in creating them. The only outcome of the “investigation” was a \$16,131 fine from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which the multi-billion-dollar corporation has contested.

On Monday, several Toledo Jeep workers who spoke to the WSWS immediately associated the death of the Dundee worker with Antonio Gaston’s death last summer. A 10-year veteran Toledo Jeep worker said, “He got crushed working on the line. Shawn Fain does not give a damn about us. We had the same thing happen here last summer. That was the first time since I started working here that we had a death inside the facility. I know the terrible emotional toll it takes on workers and the baggage those workers go through.”

Referring to Fain’s support for Trump’s tariffs, the laid off Dundee worker concluded, “He’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing, and he’s been unclothed. Fain sold everybody a dream only to sell us out. I supported Will Lehman in the election, he was fighting for everybody,” the worker said, referring to the Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker and socialist who fought to abolish the UAW bureaucracy, transfer power to shop-floor workers and unite US workers with their class brothers internationally against the transnational corporations and the profit system.

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