

# Hundreds attend Detroit funeral for Stellantis Dundee Engine worker Ronald Adams

Jerry White  
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Hundreds of co-workers, friends and family members attended a funeral service in Detroit Monday morning for Stellantis worker Ronnie Adams. The 63-year-old skilled tradesman was crushed to death by an automated crane at the Dundee Engine Complex in southeast Michigan on April 7.

Three weeks after his death, workers and family members have not gotten any details about deadly industrial accident and potential safety violations that produced the tragedy.

A large delegation of Dundee workers attended the memorial and received a warm ovation from those attending the service at the Kadesh Baptist Church. Family members and friends recounted Adams' role as mentor of young people, a coach and a father of 10 and grandfather of 11 in a blended family he shared with wife Shamenia Stewart-Adams.

Adams was born in 1962 and grew up in Detroit. After graduating Henry Ford High School, he joined the Air Force. After leaving the service, he earned an associate degree in Electronic Engineering Technology in 1988 and then got a job as an aircraft mechanic at Northwest/Delta Airlines, where he worked for 16 years.

In the early 2000s he got a job at Global Engine Manufacturing Alliance (GEMA) plant in Dundee, originally a joint venture between then DaimlerChrysler, Hyundai Motor Company and Mitsubishi Motors. He worked at GEMA, which was fully taken over by Chrysler in 2009, and worked there 19 years until his death three weeks ago. During this time, according to his obituary, he "proudly earned his journeyman license—a milestone that reflected his relentless pursuit of mastery of his craft."

Michael White, who worked with Adams at Northwest/Delta, told the WSW, "Ronnie was a great man, very great with his aircraft work. You felt very safe and comfortable around him. He always practiced

precaution and watched out for our safety and for the safety of the airlines."

On the circumstances surrounding his death, White said, "This needs to be thoroughly investigated to find out what happened and what wasn't addressed." If the facts were covered up, he said, "it is going to happen to someone else, some other family members, and we don't want to see that. So, we have to get down to the business of what happened."

White said workers had to be vigilant about their own safety, oversee regular safety checks in the workplaces. "We should have safety committees and elect different people to find out what is going and taking care of hydraulics and other machinery that is malfunctioning."

Commenting on Trump's plans to dismantle the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), he said, "That's going to be terrible. We need to make sure we keep it safe for all of us. We have kids, we have family members, and we don't want this to happen again."

Pointing to the raft of deadly airline malfunctions, White added, "The airlines have to take precautions and make sure the planes are safe, and "Ronnie did a great job with that, making sure that the planes were up to par and everything." Asked what he would say if an official investigation tried to blame Adams for his own death, White said, "I would say no, that's not true."

Aware of Adams' skill level, workers and family members are demanding answers and are concerned that management, the United Auto Workers union and state agencies, will try to sweep the matter under the rug.

"We need a thorough investigation and get all of the parties involved because we know it's a cover up and corporate does that," Shevaughn Adams, Ronnie's sister and a retired US Postal Service worker, told the WSW. Concerned that UAW officials would help join the cover up, she said, "That was the problem I had when I worked

at the Post Office. What am I paying dues for if you're doing that [colluding with management]? I thought you are supposed to fight for me, not [work] with them. That's corporate."

She said an independent investigation by rank-and-file workers was necessary because "the workers know" about safety violations. "Someone said management might have unplugged something because they were going to lay off people the next day." Commenting on her brother's skills, she said, "He knew all about safety."

Dundee workers who spoke to the WSWs the day of the fatal accident raised the possibility that company and union officials had skirted basic safety precautions to hasten the restart of production at the Dundee Engine Complex, which is undergoing a \$150 million retooling to produce new engines and battery trays for Jeep and Dodge brand vehicles. When new product launches are scheduled, one worker said, "Safety goes out the window."

A Dundee worker at the funeral said he supported a rank-and-file investigation. "It would have to be organized by the workers themselves, because I don't know what rules and regulations the UAW has for that."

In fact, officials from the UAW International's Health and Safety Department, headed by union president Shawn Fain, and UAW Local 723 have not revealed any information from their so-called investigation they are reportedly conducting with the company and Michigan Occupational Safety and Health inspectors. Instead, Chris Sharpe, the local union vice president, has said, "At the appropriate time, we will share more information to you all."

During the funeral service, a representative from UAW Local 723 spoke about Adams, acknowledging how much he was loved in the plant and how he regularly checked on the well-being of his co-workers. In his remarks, however, the local union spokesman did not raise any safety concerns nor indicate what the UAW intended to do about Adams' death.

All he could say was that the AFL-CIO and the UAW would be "honoring" Adams at the International Workers Memorial Day event taking place in Detroit Monday.

In a statement issued for Workers Memorial Day, UAW President Shawn Fain, who has backed Trump's trade war measures, deliberately concealed the administration's destruction of the federal occupational safety and health agency, saying nothing more than "Every administration puts a different emphasis on different topics." Fain added that the UAW was "committed to working with every

presidential administration to pass legislation that protects every working person in this great nation to ensure their right to go home the same way they came to work every single day."

A Stellantis Sterling Heights Stamping worker who attended the funeral and is a friend of the family said, "Workers have to do our own investigation. The union is always talking about safety, safety, safety. But when there is an issue you bring to their attention, nothing is done about it. It's not the same UAW that it was 20-25 years ago. When you had a problem, you could bring it to them, and they were on it in 24-48 hours. Now they are on the side of management, and to them you're just a number.

"They always say, 'We want you to leave the door the same way you walked in.' But we're short-handed and overworked. When Covid first hit, it was running rampant through my plant and Sterling Heights Assembly, and workers walked out because the UAW and management wanted to keep us working. Now, Trump wants to get rid of OSHA—that's a slap in the face. I'd like to see him work in a giant factory like ours."

"If the truth doesn't come out it will continue and happen to someone else, and workers will be losing their loved ones," a Detroit Public Schools Community District social worker and family friend said. "It's not fair and it's not right. Something should be done. It's about lining their own pockets, and they are not concerned about who is making their profits for them every day. No workers, no company. They don't care about the lives of the workers who get up every day to run these companies. Now they want to cut Social Security after they took it out of our paychecks for our whole lives; How dare you because you're sitting behind a big wall, lining your pockets?"

She concluded, "There should be an investigation to the fullest into what happened to Ronnie."

*Are you an autoworker at Stellantis or another company? If you support an independent rank-and-file investigation into the death of Ronnie Adams, Toledo Jeep worker Antonio Gaston and other workers, fill out the form below.*



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