

For a rank-and-file investigation into the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr.!

International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees

13 May 2025

The IWA-RFC urges workers at Dundee and across the auto industry to come forward with information and support this investigation. Fill out the form at the end to send us your comments. We will protect your anonymity.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calls for an independent investigation—led by rank-and-file workers—into the tragic and preventable death of Ronald Adams Sr., a 63-year-old machine repairman crushed on April 7, 2025, at Stellantis' Dundee Engine Complex in southeast Michigan.

There must not be another cover-up. An inquiry independent of Stellantis, the United Auto Workers (UAW) apparatus and state authorities is essential to uncover the truth, expose systemic safety violations and prevent future deaths. It must gather testimony from Dundee workers, autoworkers at other plants, safety experts and others with relevant knowledge. Such a workers' investigation is crucial to laying the basis for genuine rank-and-file oversight over safety and production conditions in the factories.

According to a brief note posted by the UAW on April 28, Adams was servicing a Cinetic Washer in Department 7300 when “the overhead gantry engaged, pinning Brother Adams between the gantry and the conveyor” and causing fatal upper torso injuries. The UAW stated that an investigation was being conducted by the UAW-Stellantis Health and Safety Department, the International UAW and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA).

But over a month later, Adams' family and coworkers have received no information about the conditions that led to his death. “We have not been told what happened or what caused my husband's death,” Ronald's widow, Shamenia Stewart-Adams, told the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*. “Outside of condolences, we have not gotten anything from the UAW.”

This secrecy violates MIOSHA's own policy, which requires families to be provided with “timely and accurate information at all stages of the investigation,” as outlined in its July 2024 Field Operations Manual. MIOSHA has no limitation on how long it will take to release its findings and workers and relatives are justifiably alarmed that a whitewash is underway to shield the company and the UAW, potentially scapegoating Adams himself.

Such a cover-up is foreshadowed by the UAW's Workers Memorial Day video issued on April 28—the very day Adams was buried. In the video, Stellantis executives and UAW-Stellantis Department Director Kevin Gotinsky praised their “joint efforts” for a safe workplace and blamed accidents on “unsafe acts” by workers. One Stellantis executive even warned, “A shortcut may save you a moment of time, but it could lead to a lifetime of consequences.” This is nothing less than a slander against Adams and his fellow workers.

Ronald Adams was a veteran tradesman and safety advocate, known as the “protector of the plant.” He had worked at Dundee for 19 years, earning a UAW journeyman card in mechanical repair, and spent 16 years prior as an aircraft mechanic at Northwest/Delta Airlines. “My husband knew safety better than the head of safety in the plant,” Shamenia said. His co-workers, she said, “are all outraged at what happened, how it happened and the unsafe conditions they have to work in. They're angry over how many times they have written up a machine and nothing was done about it.”

America's industrial slaughterhouse

Only a workers' investigation—free from company and UAW bureaucracy interference—can reveal the truth and hold those responsible accountable. Otherwise, the auto plants will remain industrial killing fields.

Ronald Adams' death is not an isolated incident. On August 21, 2024, Antonio Gaston, a 53-year-old father of four, was crushed at the Toledo Jeep Complex. Stellantis was later cited for “serious” safety violations—namely, lack of adequate machine guarding—but has contested the \$16,131 fine. The case remains open 10 months later.

On June 25, 2024, 57-year-old machine repairman Franklin “Tracy” Logsdon died after falling into a 21,000-gallon tank at the Metalsa plant in Kentucky. OSHA cited the company for seven violations and fined it \$172,000. The company is contesting the fines. On June 6, 2024, 28-year-old Daulton Simmers was “thermally annihilated” at a Caterpillar foundry

in Illinois when molten iron poured onto his workstation. Caterpillar was fined \$32,262 for two serious violations—also contested.

On April 17, 2024, Tywaun Long Jr., 46, collapsed and died of a heart attack on the line at Ford's Dearborn Truck Plant after being denied relief. MIOSHA found no violations, merely recommending AED machines be installed closer to the line.

These tragedies are part of a broader national crisis. According to the AFL-CIO, approximately 140,000 workers die annually from hazardous working conditions—5,283 from injuries, and an estimated 135,000 from occupational diseases. In 2023, an average of 385 workers died every day. Due to rampant underreporting, the actual number of work-related injuries and illnesses in private industry ranges from 5.2 million to 7.8 million per year.

Yet fewer than 1,800 federal and state inspectors are tasked with monitoring over 11 million workplaces—just one inspector for every 85,000 workers. OSHA's budget amounts to just \$3.92 per worker. In 2024, the average fine for a serious safety violation was only \$4,083. The penalty for killing a worker: \$16,131. Since OSHA's founding in 1970, only 137 fatality cases have resulted in criminal prosecution.

Now, even this limited regulatory regime is being dismantled. The Trump administration has gutted the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and created a “Department of Government Efficiency” led by none other than Elon Musk—one of the worst violators of workplace safety. Trump's goal is clear: to eliminate all restrictions on corporate exploitation of labor.

Workers must seize the initiative! For a rank-and-file investigation!

There is growing concern that crucial evidence in Adams' case is being destroyed or manipulated. According to coworkers, the control panel placards identifying shut-off points for machinery were not updated after the gantry system was relocated. While Adams locked out the equipment he was working on, the gantry—which ultimately crushed him—was likely still energized. Workers have long reported outdated and misleading placards at the facility.

This deadly negligence occurred during a major retooling of the Dundee complex for Stellantis' new engine and vehicle platforms. “When it's launch time, safety goes out the window,” a former coworker of Adams said.

If this crime is buried, more lives will be sacrificed for profit! This is especially true as UAW President Shawn Fain collaborates with Trump's economic nationalism and supports “reshoring” under sweatshop conditions.

That is why a rank-and-file investigation is needed. This will

be part of the process of transferring power and decision-making from management's slave drivers in the corrupt UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor.

Adams' family members told the WSWS they supported the call for an independent investigation by rank-and-file workers, citing concerns about a potential cover-up. “If we don't speak out against these corporations,” his widow Shamenia said, “it's going to be other families losing their loved ones.”

The IWA-RFC urges workers at Dundee and across the auto industry to come forward with evidence, support this investigation, and help publicize its findings. Workers should demand answers to certain critical questions, including but not limited to:

- Was the safety lockout system compromised in Department 7300 on the Cinetic Washer?
- Is there more than one lockout system on this workstation and others containing gantries and robots?
- Are there documented records of previous malfunctions with this specific gantry, particularly after its relocation from the south to the north plant?
- Did manpower shortages, cost-cutting pressures and the rush to restart production contribute to this fatal incident?
- What specific safety violations and systemic failures enabled this “accident”?

The goal is to empower rank-and-file committees to take control of safety conditions and line speed, abolish toothless joint labor-management safety committees and end the dictatorship of production for profit.

This fight is not only national but international. The IWA-RFC calls on autoworkers in the US, Canada, Mexico, China and beyond to unite across borders. No more deaths for corporate gain! The auto industry must be transformed into a public utility, run under the collective ownership and democratic control of the working class.

Only the working class can guarantee the right to life, health and safety on the job. The time to act is now! Fill out the form below to become involved in and support a rank-and-file investigation into the death of Ronald Adams Sr.!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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