

# Michigan safety agency denies information request as support grows for rank-and-file investigation of death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr.

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The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) has denied a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request submitted by the *World Socialist Web Site* seeking details from the state agency's investigation into the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr. The 63-year-old skilled tradesman was crushed to death on April 7 at the Dundee Engine Complex in southeast Michigan.

More than five weeks after the fatal accident, Adams' family, co-workers and the public have yet to receive any information from MIOSHA, Stellantis management or the United Auto Workers (UAW) about the causes and circumstances surrounding his death.

According to MIOSHA's own July 2024 Field Operations Manual, officials are obligated to provide victims' families with "timely and accurate information at all stages of the investigation." As of this writing, however, the Adams' family has received no updates.

On May 12, the WSWs submitted a FOIA request to MIOSHA, seeking "records such as narratives, interviews, citations, photographs and any evidence of company abatement measures that could clarify the causes of the fatality and identify potential safety violations."

In a letter signed by Toscha Klopp, the agency's FOIA coordinator, on May 14, MIOSHA denied the request. In it, Klopp wrote:

The MIOSHA investigation that you are requesting is not complete at this time. MIOSHA must have access to witnesses, witness testimony, and information free from external interference that would occur from the public disclosure of preliminary and pending investigations. The public disclosure of preliminary statements and related investigative materials and information would compromise the investigation by jeopardizing the accuracy and thoroughness of the investigation, as well as agency determinations yet to be made, including whether administrative proceedings might be commenced. Therefore, pursuant to the Michigan FOIA, 442 of 1976,

MCL 15.243(1)(b)(i), these records are exempted from disclosure on the grounds that release of the information would interfere with ongoing law enforcement proceedings. We anticipate it will be several weeks before the investigation is complete.

The MIOSHA official failed to explain how disclosing vital information sought by Adams' family, co-workers and the public would "compromise the investigation" or jeopardize its "accuracy and thoroughness." Nor did Ms. Klopp clarify how the public release of preliminary findings would hinder the agency's ability to access witnesses, testimony or other relevant information.

MIOSHA is legally obligated to investigate this fatal accident. But its blanket refusal to release any information underscores the fact that the official investigation is likely to result in a whitewash, a token fine and the continued perpetuation of unsafe conditions that will claim more lives in the future.

The MIOSHA official warns that "external interference" could obstruct access to witnesses, testimony and information. But this is an apt description of the role played by the "UAW-Stellantis Health and Safety Department," which is largely overseeing the investigation—with MIOSHA providing "assistance."

The UAW-Stellantis Health and Safety Department is a joint labor-management committee that unites the two entities directly responsible for the unsafe conditions that led to Adams' death—and that therefore have the greatest interest in covering up their role.

This was underscored by the shameless Workers Memorial Day video released by the UAW on April 28, in which corporate and UAW officials congratulated themselves on promoting safety while blaming accidents on the "unsafe acts" of supposedly careless workers.

As one of Adams' former co-workers told the WSWs:

You can bet after what happened in Toledo [where Jeep worker Antonio Gaston was killed in August 2024], they're trying to make sure nothing comes out about this.

Once they found Ronnie's body, they probably whisked all the witnesses away—everyone who was on that line or nearby. They had them up in the front office, telling them, "No one talks to nobody." They try to scare people into silence by warning that they'll be labeled and that something could happen to their career or other bad things if they speak out. That's how they keep people quiet.

As for the claim that releasing information would "interfere with ongoing law enforcement proceedings," the reality is that in OSHA's entire 55-year history, only 137 fatality cases have ever resulted in criminal prosecution!

MIOSHA imposes no time limit on how long it can take to release the findings of an investigation. Even if its investigatory work is completed within "several weeks," it can still take months or longer before any results are made public. A case is not officially closed until citations are issued, fines are levied and the company is given the opportunity to appeal and contest any findings.

For example, the case of Antonio Gaston, a 53-year-old father of four crushed to death at the Toledo Jeep Complex, remains open more than 10 months later. Stellantis was fined \$16,131 for the life of this worker, and the multibillion-dollar company is still contesting it.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has initiated a rank-and-file investigation into the tragic and entirely preventable death of Ronald Adams Sr. As the IWA-RFC declared:

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.

The announcement of the rank-and-file investigation has been met with enthusiasm by Ronald's family members, former co-workers and other autoworkers. One worker wrote to the WSWS:

Yes! I call for an independent investigation, and I also support moving safety to the Rank & File!! I was seriously injured at Dundee Engine Plant in 7/2010 during certification of zone #1. My zone had many gantries and robots, and they will *kill you* if not locked properly. Period. Every skill tradesman knows this!! Ronnie was good at what he does. Please, for Ronnie and his family, let's get an independent investigation and stop this from ever happening again!

When I was injured at Dundee Engine Plant, the union allowed management to scare me into coming into work even when the surgeon said no! That made me see the writing on the wall after all that I have done for this company. Worked through my breaks, came in early,

stayed late to help this company, and they screwed me good. My fellow employees: Stop these ungodly acts that are happening everywhere! **STAND UP & FIGHT FOR THIS INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION!** Thank You All

RIP MR. RONNIE ADAMS

A worker at the Stellantis Sterling Stamping Plant in suburban Detroit said:

Every employee was saddened by Ronnie Adams' death. A full investigation needs to be pursued. It is not the same relationship that the UAW used to have with the corporations years ago. Now, they're friends, and it's outrageous to see they are trying to cover up this man's death. I'm sure of it. He was a very well loved and an exemplary worker.

The IWA-RFC is calling on workers at the Dundee Engine Complex and throughout the auto industry to come forward with evidence, support the investigation and help publicize its findings. The aim of this independent inquiry is not only to uncover the truth about Adams' death but to lay the foundation for rank-and-file committees that can take control of safety conditions and line speed, dismantle the toothless joint labor-management safety bodies and end the dictatorship of production for corporate profit.

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:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**