

# UAW pressing Stellantis to “finish their retooling” of Dundee plant as cover-up of Ronald Adams’ death continues

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*Are you a worker at Stellantis Dundee or another auto plant? Fill out the form at the end of this article to support the independent investigation into the death of Ronald Adams Sr., which has been initiated by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Your identity will be kept confidential.*

In a June 5 letter to union members, the head of the United Auto Workers Stellantis Department said the union was “pressing the company to finish their retooling” at the Dundee Engine Complex and restart production—even though workers still don’t know what caused the death of Ronald Adams Sr. at the plant more than two months ago.

Adams, 63, a skilled and experienced machine repairman, was crushed to death at the Dundee plant in the early morning hours of April 7. A gantry that picks up and moves engine blocks activated suddenly inside the enclosed factory cell where Adams was reportedly doing maintenance work on a Cinetic washer. He died from crushing torso injuries and traumatic asphyxia.

Adams’ family and coworkers have not received any explanation for the fatal accident from the company, the UAW, or the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA). Workers are outraged over the restart of production, with one telling the WSWs it was “shady” to resume operations before the cause of Adams’ death is known.

The letter from UAW-Stellantis Department Director Kevin Gotinsky does not even mention Ronald Adams by name, despite his 19 years of work at the Dundee plant and payment of UAW dues until his untimely death. In addition to earning the respect of his fellow workers, Adams was a beloved husband, father, and grandfather.

Gotinsky blithely writes, “We are in regular communication with Stellantis about Dundee and are pressing the company to finish their retooling, while ensuring that the health and safety of our members is the top priority.”

This is a fraud. Since Adams’ death, Gotinsky and the rest of the UAW bureaucracy have only prioritized protecting the corporation and covering up its own complicity in the unsafe conditions that led to the tragedy. An investigation conducted by the UAW-Stellantis Health and Safety Department, with the “assistance” of the UAW International and MIOSHA, cannot be anything but a whitewash.

Workers told the WSWs that Stellantis is at least a year behind in retooling and has systematically violated standard safety procedures—with UAW approval—to avoid delays and launch a new line of engines and other components. This includes forcing Adams and other skilled tradesmen to work without spotters and widely distributing “cheat keys” to bypass lockout/tagout procedures. Management, they say, gambled with workers’ lives by exposing them to active machinery to reduce downtime and avoid paying equipment manufacturers for repairs or replacements.

Shortly after Adams’ death, management quietly asked everyone with a cheat key to return them with no repercussions, workers have reported, and spotters were assigned to skilled trades workers servicing dangerous equipment. The plant chairman, Adams’ direct supervisor, and the UAW safety rep were also dismissed, workers have said.

Now the UAW bureaucracy is pressing for a rapid restart of the plant, endangering even more workers.

The reference to Dundee is at the bottom of Gotinsky’s letter, which is presented as an update on “important contractual issues.” Most of it discusses the thousands of UAW members laid off by Stellantis after the UAW bureaucracy sold out the 2023 contract battle.

“After the previous Stellantis leadership pursued a misguided race-to-the-bottom strategy—leading to plummeting sales and thousands of layoffs,” Gotinsky says, “the company is now working to regain its footing” under new CEO Antonio Filosa. UAW leadership, he says, “will continue meeting with Filosa to push for honoring

commitments to increase investment in American workers.”

UAW President Shawn Fain has embraced Trump’s trade war measures and claims that US workers can’t have jobs unless workers in Canada, Mexico, and other countries lose theirs. But the “reshoring” of jobs to the US is dependent upon the UAW bureaucracy enforcing cost-cutting and sweatshop conditions.

Gotinsky claims the UAW has a “responsibility to enforce our contract and ensure our laid-off members are brought back to work,” telling workers, “If you believe the company is violating the contract, contact your steward or committee person immediately.”

But every UAW member knows contacting union officials—if they can find them—is an exercise in futility. Complaints about speed-up, unsafe conditions, and management abuse go nowhere. “Whatever the company wants, the UAW wants,” one Dundee worker told the WSWs. “They want to keep the money flowing.”

The number of indefinitely laid-off workers has dropped from 3,228 on February 1 to 2,425 on June 1, the UAW claims. Another 423 are expected to be rehired soon, largely because the UAW pushed older workers to quit through Voluntary Termination of Employment Programs (VTP) and Incentivized Program for Retirement (IPR).

Addressing complaints that laid-off workers are being passed over while Stellantis hires lower-paid replacements, Gotinsky writes, “There has been confusion about the company’s ability to hire summer replacements, while our members are laid-off.” The company, he says, can bring on new temporary part-time employees “if there is no business need for a full-time position,” but adds, “If you know of any new full-time hires, please notify a union representative immediately, as we will want to take swift action.”

It should be recalled that Fain and the UAW bureaucracy agreed to a clause buried in the 2023 UAW-Stellantis contract allowing the firing of thousands of temp workers they had promised would be made full-time if the deal was ratified.

The letter boasts that the UAW is gaining over 400 new dues-paying members at the StarPlus battery plant in Kokomo, Indiana, a joint venture between Stellantis and Samsung. As the WSWs recently reported amid a wave of injuries at the plant:

While Fain and Biden publicly championed a “just transition” to electric vehicles, their real aim was securing the UAW’s right to collect dues from new EV workers—not ensuring those workers are safe or fairly paid. In return, the automakers were assured that UAW leadership would not disrupt profits.

Gotinsky ends his letter on an ominous note, saying that Stellantis has appointed launch coordinators and is having “teams walk through the plant to determine what work will need to be done by Skilled Trades prior to opening” of the Belvidere, Illinois plant. “This is positive news,” he writes. “We will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that we are on track and the contract is followed.”

Given Ronald Adams’ death and Dundee workers’ experience, these statements are a warning to skilled trades, production workers, and contractors involved in the Belvidere plant restart. As one Dundee worker put it, “When it’s launch time, safety goes out the window.”

Gotinsky is part of the highly paid and corrupt bureaucracy at the UAW’s national “Solidarity House” headquarters in Detroit, pulling in \$198,965 in reported income and disbursements last year as a “Top Administrative Assistant,” according to the UAW’s financial filings with the US Labor Department.

Gotinsky and the UAW bureaucracy have created conditions that make worker injuries and deaths inevitable, and since Adams’ death, they’ve protected the company. Gotinsky appeared in a video with two Stellantis executives—released on the day of Adams’ funeral—praising “joint efforts” to protect workers and blaming accidents on carelessness.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has launched an independent investigation to end this cover-up, uncover the true causes of Ronald Adams’ death, and hold those responsible to account. We urge workers to come forward with testimony about safety conditions at Dundee and other plants using the form below. Your identity will be protected.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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