

Dana Fort Wayne worker reports on brutal conditions at his workplace

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The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* recently spoke to a worker at Dana Corp. in Fort Wayne, Indiana about the conditions at the company. The worker contacted the *Autoworker Newsletter* after hearing about the investigation initiated by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) into the death of Stellantis Dundee Engine worker Ronald Adams Sr. The worker's name has been withheld to avoid retaliation.

Monday marks 12 weeks since the fatal accident that killed Adams, a 63-year-old machine repairman. Adams, a husband, father and grandfather, highly skilled and respected by his coworkers, was crushed on April 7, 2025, when an overhead gantry lifting engine blocks engaged, pinning him to the conveyor. In the three months since the tragedy, Adams' family has not received any information from the United Auto Workers (UAW) bureaucracy, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or Stellantis.

Since the launch of the investigation by the IWA-RFC, Dundee workers and workers across the US and internationally have come forward to provide testimony to the investigation and build an independent opposition to the company and UAW bureaucracy.

The Fort Wayne Dana worker said, "Just like Dundee, we have no lockout tagout procedure. We have to look around for locks and find them when going into the cages. No posting of where they are; you have to look for them. There's supposed to be a lock on the cages, but there are none. Stellantis is like our plant; it depends what department you are in; some have lockout tagout measures and some are much more dangerous. We're supposed to have our own keys. With what happened to [Ronald] can happen anywhere.

"The company pushes back on safety rules. They

wiggle out of the rules and, like with anything else, the company says, 'what are you going to do?' During the contract the union let the company always talk first. They're like puppets of the company. There's just one guy that tries to help us, but the company and the United Steel Workers go against him. We had almost 30 people go to the plant manager to get him to write up a superintendent, Don Radar, that harasses everyone. Of course nothing happened. Don targets people and is racist towards some others. Anyone who doesn't agree with him has a target on their back.

"Dana sent him to Ohio, then brought him back to Fort Wayne. All the workers hate him. He called a woman a black b*tch, then pushed another person. He never got in trouble. If one of us did this, we would be fired. He purposely comes in early to finger workers."

In 2021, 3,000 Dana parts workers throughout the country waged a struggle against the company, rebelling against the sabotage of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and United Steelworkers (USW) bureaucracy, who deliberately isolated and attempted to pit workers against one another. Fort Wayne workers were falsely told by their union that Pottstown, Detroit, Toledo, Lima and others supported the rotten contract. In reality, there was overwhelming support to strike in a united struggle against the sellout deal.

To advance their fight, Dana workers founded the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee. While workers rejected the initial contract by 90 percent, workers were kept on the job by both the USW and UAW. Using threats and lies, workers were forced to continue stockpiling parts critical for the Big Three automakers as the UAW and USW prepared to ram through a second agreement. Throughout the struggles the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee continued to expose the brutal conditions in the plants while

fighting to break the grip of the union bureaucracies.

On June 1, 2021, Danny Walters, a 60-year-old worker from Dry Ridge Kentucky, hit his head while working, went into convulsions and died later that evening. The UAW refused to stop the line during his seizure. Workers in Pottstown reported high levels of CO2 in the plant with little to no ventilation.

In a separate incident, workers in Fort Wayne were gassed with Aspen One Step, a chemical disinfectant that Dana claimed it was using for cleaning the department against the threat of COVID-19. Another worker inside a robot cage stepped on a loose controller cord, fell and slammed her head twice on the concrete floor. Despite her injuries, she was sent back to the floor, later collapsing from a seizure and sent to the emergency room. Within a week she was back on the floor.

“I remember when that happened,” this worker said. “The oil inside the robot cages continuously drips and there is no way to clean it. Management gives us sponges and vacuums. Then they expect us to use mops when it’s too thick. The committeeman, Antonio King, directs us all to clean when OSHA is scheduled to come in—they call it ‘clean day.’ Then, when there’s a complaint, they try to vet each worker since some people are truthful.”

The worker went on to connect the conditions inside the plant with the broader attacks on the working class. “There are cuts to OSHA and then EPA cuts. I knew it was over when those things were cut. It’s another Erin Brockovich situation. Social Security cuts are not fair, you live your whole life working, then no retirement. He cuts all this and gives the family of one of those who stormed the capital \$5 million. We have to overthrow Trump. The cost of the war is coming out of our pockets, when we didn’t vote on it. Just like when we opposed the contract here by 11 votes, they rammed it through anyway.

Describing the vote on the sellout contract he said, “When the majority voted against it, the reps Greg and Antonio told us it was only 11 votes. We put years of blood into this place while the union left us out to dry, then give us the BS about ‘brothers and sisters.’ Don’t get in our faces when you don’t take care of your workers. We all remember when that man had a heart attack, no moment of silence, nothing. Most people didn’t know about it.”

Following the betrayal of the 2021 contract struggle, in 2023, workers at Dana Toledo Driveline and Pottstown developed rank-and-file committees, independent of the union bureaucracies, in opposition to layoffs and arbitrary firings. Dana is closing its Lima, Ohio driveshaft manufacturing plant by the end of the year, and began to lay off the factory’s 300 workers late last month. UAW Local 1765 officials have done nothing to resist this.

Carrying forward these struggles and many others, the IWA-RFC is conducting a rank-and-file investigation into the death of Ronald Adams Sr., aiming to further develop the independent class struggle and organization of the working class. Workers must take matters into their own hands, fighting for their own interests, by building the IWA-RFC. “If production stopped at Dana, it would have a massive ripple effect across all industries,” the Dana worker said. “Due to the interconnectivity between all industries in the globalized world economy, Dana workers would be in a position to impact corporations even beyond the Big Three, further strengthening their power.”

To participate in the Ronald Adams investigation and report on conditions in your own plant, fill out the form below. Your identity will be protected.



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