

Momentum builds for rank-and-file investigation three months after death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr.

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Monday marks three months since the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr. at the Dundee Engine Plant in southern Michigan. The 63-year-old skilled tradesman was crushed on April 7 by an overhead gantry that suddenly activated and pinned him against a conveyor inside an enclosed factory cell.

In the three months since the fatal accident, Adams' family and co-workers have received no meaningful information about the circumstances of his death from Stellantis, the United Auto Workers (UAW) or the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA). Last week, a MIOSHA spokesperson told the WSWs that the case "remains open."

Nevertheless, Stellantis, with the full backing of the UAW bureaucracy, is resuming full production at the plant with up to three shifts of workers. Workers are outraged that they have received no information about Adams' death and report that the company continues to cut corners on safety.

The near-daily sacrifice of workers' lives to corporate profit was starkly revealed last week in the massive explosion at a fireworks warehouse in Esparto, California. On Saturday, the bodies of seven missing workers were recovered, including brothers Jesus Ramos (18) and Jhony Ramos (22), Junior Melendez (28), and Carlos Rodriguez (41).

"It doesn't stop," said Ronald Adams' widow, Shamenia, speaking about the continuous sacrifice of workers' lives for corporate profit. "People go to work every day, just trying to make a living for their families, and then they don't come back home," she told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "My heart goes out to those families in California, because God only knows what I'm feeling and how much I'm missing my husband."

"Things have to be in place for workers on these jobs.

They face hazards and fight just to keep their pay from companies that want to take everything away. Then they get killed, and their families can't get answers. I share the grief of the families in California and support their fight to get the truth."

Shamenia said Dundee Engine workers have told her that conditions in the plant remain unsafe, even as full production resumes. "Stellantis is apparently doing so many things unsafely. Everybody is crammed into their shifts after the company forced everyone on layoff back to work."

In mid-May, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) launched an independent investigation into the death of Ronald Adams, aiming to break through the official cover-up, uncover the real causes of his death and hold those responsible accountable.

Rank-and-file workers at the plant have described a pattern of safety violations, including breaches of lockout/tagout procedures, sanctioned by the UAW bureaucracy. They report that Stellantis, more than a year behind in retooling the plant, cut corners on safety to resume production of key engines and components as quickly as possible.

The call for an independent inquiry led by rank-and-file workers is gaining broad support among autoworkers and others. At a neighborhood event in the Bagley Community of northwest Detroit, where Adams lived his entire life, IWA-RFC supporters spoke to many autoworkers who expressed support for the investigation.

"I'm very furious about this," said a young temporary part-time (TPT) worker who was laid off from the Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant after the sellout of the 2023 contract fight by the UAW bureaucracy. "I used to work for Stellantis, and hearing

about this is very heartbreaking. We need to do something about it,” she said of Ronald Adams’ death.

“We need answers about what happened, and we need to know now, because it’s not fair,” she continued. “He worked there for 19 years, and still there are no answers. That’s not right. He has a family, a wife, children. Just think about it—going there every single day, and now you are just gone. You’re making a living for your family, and you’re gone and no answers. Think about his wife and his family.

“So please, if anyone knows anything—if you were on his line, whatever shift he worked, first, second, or third—please speak up. If this was your friend, do the right thing. This is not fair. Justice for Mr. Ronald Adams.”

The worker went on to describe her own experience at Stellantis. “I was a TPT there for four years, and they laid me off—just through a text message. As for the union stewards, they don’t help you. They say TPTs have no rights.”

Referring to the sellout contract pushed by UAW President Shawn Fain, she said, “It was very unfair. They said they ended tiers, but they added more tiers. First you had TPTs, then they added TFTs [temporary full-time employees]. I told them at the union meeting not to sign the contract because it was not fair at all. And lo and behold, look what happened. At least 300 TPTs at my plant were laid off with nothing.”

Asked what she thought about rank-and-file workers organizing independently of the UAW bureaucracy to investigate Adams’ death and fight for safety, she said, “Yes, we need to have an investigation of our own. If the company is not going to do it, then it’s up to us to find out what happened.

“If you think about it, this is our brother. This is a human being. We can’t just sweep stuff under the rug when things like this just go unnoticed. This is not okay. We need answers. We need people to ask questions. Don’t be afraid.

“Is it our fault that we want to make a living and try to feed our children? Do we have to sign up to die or work unsafely? That doesn’t make any sense. We need safety. We need guidance. We need leadership. We need to all come together and find out answers and solutions.”

A laid-off Cleveland Cliffs steelworker and UAW member at the Ford Rouge Complex also spoke to WSWS reporters. “They always tell us, ‘Go home the same way you came in,’ and make that your first priority,” he said. “It’s supposed to be safety first, but the reality is you’ve got to keep working, and sometimes they cut corners. You

need to be self-aware, because sometimes they don’t consider you.”

When told that Stellantis had widely distributed “cheater keys” that could bypass lockout/tagout procedures—used by skilled trades workers to safely service deenergized equipment—he said, “I’ve seen lockout/tagout bypassed just to get things running a little bit quicker. That’s not right. That’s putting you in harm’s way to save five or ten minutes for the company.”

Referring to the factory’s reopening before workers had been told anything about the causes of Adams’ death, he said, “That’s terrible. Being secretive like that—you don’t know what to expect when you come in. Is your life going to be taken seriously or not?”

The Trump administration is installing a corporate executive from UPS and Amazon to lead the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) while shifting the agency’s focus away from enforcing safety standards to “Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation,” as one of Trump’s early executive orders put it. With deep cuts to its already inadequate budget, OSHA is set to carry out 10,000 fewer inspections this year compared to fiscal year 2024—a nearly 30 percent reduction.

“OSHA cuts are never a good thing,” the Cleveland Cliffs steelworker said. “The less focus you have on safety, the results come out as injuries and workplace fatalities.” Asked what he thought about a rank-and-file investigation into Adams’ death, he said, “The truth definitely needs to come out by any means necessary. If workers need to take the next step to get the truth out, then so be it.”

To provide information to the rank-and-file investigation, fill out the form below. All identities will be protected.



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