

“We’re like slaves”: Stellantis Dundee worker testifies at IWA-RFC hearing on death of Ronald Adams Sr.

Our reporters
3 August 2025

Defying threats of retaliation, Stellantis Dundee Engine workers have come forward to provide details about the widespread pattern of safety violations at the Michigan plant where 63-year-old machine repairman Ronald Adams Sr. was killed on April 7. Adams was performing maintenance work in an enclosed factory cell when an overhead gantry suddenly activated, pinning him to a conveyor and instantly killing him.

The information provided by Dundee workers has been critical to the independent investigation into Adams’ death being conducted by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. The IWA-RFC presented its initial findings at a public hearing in Detroit on July 27.

At the hearing, audience members heard the following testimony from John, a skilled tradesman and co-worker of Adams, who was seriously injured at the factory. Below is a transcript of an audio statement John submitted to the IWA-RFC hearing. To become involved in the inquiry or to report information on workplace deaths and injuries, submit the form at the bottom of this page.

My story is not a lie. I lived it, and I’m living it now. Twelve surgeries, and I still may lose this leg. I know when I left there [Dundee Engine], it was just chaos, and especially around launch time, safety is out the window.

It’s as simple as that. Everything gets bypassed; stuff gets shut off. It’s not going to stop. I think probably when it stops, it will be when the workers have something to say about safety, where they can look and be like, “Oh man, somebody is going to get killed in here. Let’s shut this down.”

The thing that happened to me was because of a

safety issue that we kept bringing up. Why should we have to keep crossing steel stairs to go over to fix an operation that keeps constantly going down? But the way it is now, hell, you go to your union; it’s just like going to management.

When I got injured, they let me sit there for four hours before they even let me go to the hospital. You know, my legs were red and puffy, you know, swollen. All of a sudden, they say, “Oh, we’ll give you a chair to sit down. We’ll give you another employee so you could tell him what to do.” But you didn’t do that when I’m running over these damn steps by myself all day.

Four hours later, I go to the doctor, and there’s a big, giant piece in my kneecap and stuff just floating around, tearing up all my ligaments. When the doctor finds out that it happened four hours ago, he said, “No, you should have come here when this happened.” I had to have emergency surgery.

So, then I’m off work until I see the surgeon. I get a letter the next day, FedEx’d to my house. “You have to return to work that Monday or you’ll be fired.” I hadn’t even had surgery. When I had the surgery, the doctor told me I had to be off for three weeks.

But not with them. “You’re going come in here every day and we’re going to find something for you to do,” they said. So, they had me counting thousands of washers. I’m falling asleep. I’m on medicine. They’re coming by and saying, “Hey, you can’t go to sleep.” I told them I’m not even supposed to be here. So, after I do all that, then they put me on the floor.

I’m sitting up there dozing off. You know there are engine blocks coming down the line. I could easily just fall over and slice my whole head open. I say to my chairman of the union, “Dude, what the hell is going

on?” He says, “Well, you got to kind of do what they want you to do.” I say, I’m not even supposed to be here. I’m on Oxycontin, man. I’m on the floor. I can barely stand up and y’all making me work.

The next thing I know I woke up, there was human resources, the UAW chairman and a couple other people standing over me telling me, “You’re fired because you went to sleep.”

What hurt me more than anything is my union. They did not do anything for me, nothing. They always told me, “just abide by what management says.” We’re nothing but slaves. That’s what we are.

What happened to Ronnie I know should have never happened. I knew Ronnie. We worked in the same area. We saw each other every day, in the lunchroom, everywhere. We became buddies. When I got hurt, Ronnie was still calling, “Hey, man, how you doing? Need anything? You cool?”

You could tell people who take safety at the utmost. Ronnie was like. “Hey man, make sure you put your lock out on there.” He came from aircraft mechanics where their stuff is much stricter than ours. So, he brought that to the plant. Not one time have I ever seen him say, “You know, man, we can bypass this and get around that.” It was never anything like that. I could never, ever, see Ronnie doing that.

I could never, ever see Ronnie going into a cage knowing that it’s energized because we know what’s going to happen. If it moves and you’re in there, it isn’t going to be like, “Oh, stop, robot.” It’s either death or maimed. There’s no warning. It’s just a boom and it’s gone.

So, for him to be in there like that, he wouldn’t have done it. He wouldn’t have done it.

I just want to tell the workers, you guys and girls know what’s going on. You know the safety issues. And I know, hey, you want to keep your job and stuff like that. But whoever thought this would have happened—this, right here, and especially to Ronnie? And if it could happen to him, it’s going to happen again, and somebody else is going to be crying, doing a funeral, and we are going through the same thing again. Nothing is ever going to get done unless we find out. And if you don’t have an independent investigation and just listen to what the company says—damn the company just opened up the plant, that shows you what they are going to do. The union is in bed with

management. It’s like a big game to make money at the cost of our lives.

All of you that are listening, you know what I’m talking about. When you go to work, you feel like you can’t say anything, you can’t do anything, you can’t speak out or you could lose your job. They keep us like that, and as long as we stay like that, it is always going to be like that.

This has got to stop, because we can make engines and we can make cars without people getting killed. If we were in control, the workers, we’d stop the line. We would be like, “No, nobody is going to do this because nobody wants to get killed.” And until it gets like that, this is going to keep happening.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact