

5 months after death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr., silence and cover-up continue

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8 September 2025

Five months have passed since the April 7 death of 63-year-old skilled tradesman Ronald Adams Sr. at Stellantis' Dundee Engine Complex in Michigan. His family and co-workers still have no answers. Stellantis, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) have all maintained a wall of silence.

Adams was crushed to death when a gantry hoist suddenly activated while he was performing maintenance in an enclosed factory cell containing an industrial washer. Production at the plant has since resumed, but neither his co-workers nor his family have been given any explanation as to what caused the fatality.

Speaking to the *World Socialist Web Site* last week, his widow Shamenia Stewart-Adams said:

We still have not heard anything. They have called workers back to work, and we don't have answers. They have to be somewhere in the investigation, because surely they're done walking through the plant and questioning folks. Have there been more safety issues? I don't know, but all I do know is that my husband is dead, and the workers are back working."

Autoworkers at Dundee and other plants report that, since Adams' death, management and the UAW have quietly implemented changes to safety procedures without acknowledging their responsibility for Adams' death or for the deaths of other workers.

Instead of addressing hazards, auto and trucking companies, with the backing of the UAW, have imposed punitive measures, disciplining workers for alleged violations of lockout/tagout and other safety procedures. This scapegoating hides the real, systemic causes of unsafe conditions—job cuts, overwork and speedup—while intimidating workers into silence.

Meanwhile, the deadly toll in America's industrial slaughterhouse continues to rise. Pointing to the deaths of two steelworkers—39-year-old Timothy Quinn and 52-year-old Steven Menefee—in an August 11 explosion at US Steel's Clairton Coke Works in Pennsylvania, Shamenia remarked, "It just doesn't stop."

MIOSHA confirmed to the WSWWS that its probe into Adams' death remains "ongoing" more than 150 days after the tragedy. This stonewalling serves one purpose: to shield Stellantis and its accomplices in the UAW from accountability.

The silence surrounding Adams' death echoes other tragedies at Stellantis plants. Just last month, the family of 53-year-old Antonio Gaston, who was killed at the Toledo Assembly Plant on August 21, 2024, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the company.

"I want to know the truth of what happened to my husband at work, because I haven't gotten anything—I haven't gotten any answers," Gaston's widow Renita Shores-Gaston said at an August 11 press conference. "All the questions just go unanswered, and it's coming up on a year." She added, "I just don't want this to happen to another family."

Gaston, a father of four, had been transferred from the shuttered plant in Belvidere, Illinois. Though a material handler, he was pressed into assembly line work and was tightening undercarriage bolts, when he was caught under a moving vehicle and crushed to death.

OSHA fined Stellantis just \$16,000 for a "serious violation" over its failure to provide adequate guards to protect workers from pinch-point hazards. The multibillion-dollar corporation has contested the fine and citation, delaying the release of the inspection report and withholding information critical for workers' safety.

The family's attorney, L. Chris Stewart, asked: "Were job cuts at the factory part of this? Was the pressure to meet production quotas part of this? Putting people who are understaffed in positions they shouldn't be in, overworking the workers—all of that leads to tragedies like this."

The parallels between Adams and Gaston underscore the systemic nature of Stellantis' disregard for workers' lives, where preventable deaths are met with silence, legal maneuvers and cover-ups.

A system of ongoing death

The brutal death of Ronald Adams Sr. is far from an isolated event. Every day in America, at least 15 workers are killed on the job—or more than 5,200 each year.

Another 135,000 workers die each year from illnesses caused by exposure to chemicals and other hazardous materials. On Tuesday, the *New York Times* reported on the large number of wildfire fighters now suffering from deadly cancers, including leukemia, after being sent into toxic smoke without masks or warnings of long-term health risks.

Recent workplace fatalities include:

August 29—Strawn, Texas: Guillermo Luna, 40, was killed when his semi-truck veered off I-20, struck a guardrail and rolled into a dry creek bed.

August 27—Wabasha County, Minnesota: Craig Alan Goring, 52, of Michigan, was killed when his semi-truck left the roadway and rolled over just before noon.

August 27—Kern County, California: Hongyi Ji, 62, of Orlando, Florida, died when his semi-truck overturned at the Laval Road offramp on I-5.

August 23—Marion County, Kentucky: Firefighter Brian Hatt, 51, died from injuries sustained in a fire truck rollover crash while responding to an emergency.

August 22—Mackinac County, Michigan: A 55-year-old man was killed when the cement roller he was operating lost control on a steep grade and crushed him.

August 22—Lowell, Massachusetts: A construction worker fell to his death from the roof of a three-story multifamily house under construction on Aiken Ave.

August 21—Austin, Texas: A contractor was killed when a mobile crane tipped over at a residential construction site, trapping him inside.

August 19—Ilion, New York: Phil Whynot, an electric department foreman and 19-year municipal veteran, was killed instantly after contacting an energized transformer.

August 19—Whitesville, West Virginia: Coal miner Eric Bartram, 41, was killed in an accident at the Alpha Metallurgical Resources' Marfork Processing Plant.

August 15—Immokalee, Florida: Farmworker Marco Antonio Hernandez Guevara, a seasonal H-2A visa worker from Mexico, collapsed from heat stress in the fields. Declared brain dead on August 21, he died eight days after collapsing.

August 15—Sterling Heights, Michigan: A 41-year-old school bus driver pressed into landscaping work was electrocuted when his lift struck a live power line.

August 15—El Mirage, Arizona: A contract worker was crushed beneath a steel plate weighing more than 1,000 pounds at a BNSF rail yard.

August 15—Bal Harbour, Florida: A worker died from a "traumatic injury" at a Bal Harbour Shops construction site after being pulled from a confined space.

August 14—Albany, New York: LifeNet paramedic Kevin Robert collapsed and died aboard a medical helicopter while treating a patient.

August 14—Broward County, Florida: A construction worker was killed when a truck slammed into protective crash trucks guarding a line-painting crew on I-75.

August 13—Trinity County, Texas: Three contract sewer workers—John Nelson Sr., 52; Bradley Wrightsman, 46; and Brad Hutton, 47—were killed after being overcome by hydrogen sulfide gas while attempting to repair a cracked line.

The tragedies are not confined to the United States. Globally, an estimated 7,500 workers are killed every day—2.78 million each year, according to the UN Global Compact. On September 6 in Gujarat, India, six people died when a cable snapped on a cargo ropeway at the Pavagadh Hill temple site, plunging operators, laborers and a flower vendor to their deaths.

The IWA-RFC investigation and public hearing

On July 27, 2025, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) held a public hearing in Detroit to present the initial findings of its independent investigation. Testimony exposed widespread safety violations at the Dundee plant and collusion by the UAW bureaucracy. The hearing called for expanding independent, worker-led investigations to break through the stonewalling of Stellantis, the UAW and MIOSHA.

At the hearing, Mack Trucks worker and IWA-RFC leader Will Lehman declared:

Workers cannot rely on Stellantis, the UAW bureaucracy or OSHA. These institutions exist to defend corporate profits, not our lives. We must build rank-and-file committees, independent of the bureaucracy, to take control of safety and working conditions into our own hands. The fight for workers' safety is inseparable from the fight against capitalism itself.

The five-month anniversary of Adams' death comes as the Trump administration moves to gut what remains of OSHA and dismantle protections for workers. Trump's budget would cut OSHA funding by more than 8 percent, eliminate over 200 positions and slash enforcement and standards programs. Fines have been reduced, while "compliance assistance" is prioritized over inspections. At the same time, critical institutions, such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), face layoffs and lab closures as part of the fascist president's war on public health and science.

At the same time, Trump's ICE raids—including the mass roundup at the Georgia EV battery plant—are being used to terrorize immigrant workers and intimidate the entire working class. These raids are a warning: The state is preparing to use repression not only against immigrants but also against strikes, mass protests and any resistance to the destruction of the social and democratic rights won through more than a century of struggle.

At the Labor Day parade in Detroit, UAW President Shawn Fain did not utter a word about the deaths of Ronald Adams Sr. or Antonio Gaston. He was equally silent on Trump's dictatorial measures. Instead, Fain echoed the fascist president's nationalist trade war rhetoric, blaming the assault on workers' jobs and conditions on "bad trade deals" rather than on capitalism itself.

The refusal of Stellantis, the UAW and MIOSHA to release even the most basic information about Adams' death underscores the urgent need for workers to take matters into their own hands. As the IWA-RFC hearing showed, only rank-and-file committees—independent of the union bureaucracy—can expose the truth, defend workers' lives and fight to prevent further tragedies.

Five months after Ronald Adams Sr.'s preventable death, the silence of the corporations, the union apparatus and the state is an indictment of the entire system. The continuing toll of workplace fatalities—from Michigan to Gujarat—makes clear that Adams' death was not an exception but part of the daily sacrifice of workers' lives on the altar of profit.

The demand must be raised with renewed urgency: Workers' lives matter! The sacrifice of workers' lives and health for corporate profit must end. The truth about Ronald Adams' death must be uncovered and those responsible held to account.

To join the rank-and-file investigation into the death of Ronald Adams and other workers, fill out the form below.



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