

6 months since the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr., widow asks: ‘Why don’t I have answers?’

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Tuesday, October 7, marked six months since the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr. at the company’s Dundee Engine Complex in southern Michigan. Stellantis, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Michigan workplace safety agency have all remained silent on the cause of death of the 63-year-old skilled tradesman, even as full production at the plant has long since resumed.

Adams, a 19-year veteran known for defending his coworkers’ safety, was crushed to death while performing maintenance on an industrial washer system. An automated hoist, or gantry, suddenly activated and pinned him against a conveyor, causing fatal injuries to his torso.

A spokesperson for the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) told the *World Socialist Web Site* that “the investigation is still ongoing,” offering no updates six months after the fatality. Earlier this month, a Dundee worker reported, “They’re going to have every machine running at full blast, and they’re not saying anything about how Ronald died.” Several officials who were suspended after the fatality, including Plant Manager LaMarcus Keels, have since returned to work, the worker said.

The UAW’s silence is particularly damning. President Shawn Fain has given interviews to the *New York Times*, *Jacobin* and other outlets praising the 2023 “Stand Up” strike, but he has made no mention of Adams or of Antonio Gaston, another Stellantis worker who was crushed to death eight months earlier in Toledo, Ohio. The union has provided no information to members about either death.

Adams’ widow, Shamenia Stewart Adams, told the WSWS:

Initially, MIOSHA reached out to me by calling

me and sending a letter with who the person in charge of the investigation was. But after calling them so many times, I haven’t heard anything from them since May or June. When this happened, the plant manager called everybody into the auditorium to say, “I failed Ronald Adams and his family.” That’s what he said out of his own mouth. I want to know: What were the grounds for his suspension? And if he’s back to work, what were the grounds for bringing him back?

Why don’t I have answers? We found them liable. We didn’t find them liable. Something. I should be notified, because the people who were suspended pending an investigation are back. Stellantis is investigating themselves. As far as they’re concerned, it’s always going to be an “ongoing investigation,” because as long as it’s still open, you don’t have to answer to anybody.

In May 2025, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) initiated its own investigation. On July 27, the IWA-RFC convened a public hearing in Detroit to present its findings and hear testimony from Dundee workers, members of Adams’ family and safety experts.

The investigation’s findings included:

- Production pressures and safety violations. Retooling was more than a year behind schedule. With UAW approval, management cut corners to resume production quickly. “Cheater keys” were widely distributed to bypass lockouts and speed up repairs.

- Longstanding unsafe conditions. The factory had a record of serious injuries during new product launches, and injured workers were forced back to the line despite

doctors' orders.

- UAW complicity. Through its corporatist partnership, the UAW oversaw lockout/tagout procedures while shielding union officials from legal liability. After Adams' death, both Stellantis and the UAW scrambled to conceal responsibility, ordering workers to return cheater keys to bins near the union office.

- Ignored witnesses. Contractors from Fives Cinetic who worked with Adams to set up the washer and gantry system were never interviewed by Stellantis, the UAW or MIOSHA.

Since Adams' death, Stellantis has imposed new safety measures without acknowledging its role. The changes have served mainly to discipline workers, not protect them. Violations—often the result of overwork and speedup—are used as pretexts for firings, while management and union committees chant “safety first” even as they enforce long hours and production quotas.

A veteran electrical engineer at the Chrysler Technology Center in Auburn Hills, Michigan, told the WSWS:

There have been increased safety protocols in engineering for locking out machinery and electrical panels. This is something we've never been required to do in the more than 30 years I've worked. This is a good thing. However, it would have never happened if [Adams] hadn't lost his life. I heard that 22 persons have lost their jobs because of this incident in Dundee. After all these decades, we finally have safety protocols to follow. Why does someone always have to die before these protocols are ever put in place?

Meanwhile, the American industrial slaughter continues. Recent workplace deaths include:

- September 27 – Eureka County, Nevada: **Jeremy Smokey**, 37, father of three, killed at the Goldrush Underground Mine, the 25th mining death of 2025.

September 30 – Spirit Lake, Iowa: **Balduino Florencio Velasquez**, 23, crushed by a tipped forklift.

- September 30 – Richmond, Kentucky: **Edwin Burton II**, 61, killed when an air conditioner unit fell on him at Eastern Kentucky University.

- October 1 – Canton, Wisconsin: A 71-year-old logger killed by a falling tree.

- October 2 – Rockford, Illinois: **Horacio Prada**

Dominguez, 38, fatally pinned between stone slabs.

- October 2 – Harris County, Texas: **Jose Bonilla**, 25, struck and killed by a flying truck tire.

- October 3 – Negaunee Township, Michigan: A contractor suffocated from toxic gases while escaping down an 85-foot pipe.

- October 4 – Pryor, Oklahoma: **Lonnie Dean Swift**, 57, killed at the LSB Industries chemical plant.

As part of its conspiracy to establish a dictatorship, the Trump administration is using the government shutdown to halt reporting on workplace deaths, fire hundreds of thousands of federal employees and eliminate what little protection OSHA provides. Trump's budget director, Russell Vought, a key author of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, is spearheading this attack.

Project 2025, a right-wing blueprint, denounces OSHA for being “weaponized” by the Biden administration, claiming it tried to impose vaccine mandates on “84 million Americans through their workplaces.” Calling for a system that “minimizes interference with the operation of the free market and free enterprise,” it demands even greater limits on OSHA's weakened powers.

Project 2025 opposes national safety standards, insisting that such “floors” be treated as negotiable in unionized workplaces. Employers and unions could bargain away protections on lockout/tagout, safety training, heat illness, combustible dust, confined spaces and injury reporting—making it even harder to expose corporate crimes.

Asked about the dismantling of safety standards and Trump's drive to return workers to conditions of industrial slavery, Shamenia Stewart Adams said: “I can't believe the government is trying to go back to that. But I think people are not going back, not without a fight. People would rather lay their lives down and die fighting, than go back to that.”

Workers who want to expose the truth about Ronald Adams' death—and to help expose the broader wave of industrial carnage sweeping workplaces across the country—should take part in the ongoing rank-and-file investigation by filling out the form below.



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