

Anger grows over forced overtime, rising injuries and UAW complicity at Stellantis' Toledo Assembly Complex

Jerry White
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Are you a worker at Stellantis or any other auto or auto parts company? Send us information about the conditions in your plant, by filling out the form at the end of this article. Your identity will be protected.

For nearly two months, the Stellantis Toledo Assembly Complex has been kept under what management calls “emergency status,” during which workers have been on 9–10 hour shifts, 6–7 days a week, with many not seeing a day off for more than three weeks. According to an internal safety memo posted inside the plant, the factory accounted for 30 percent of the injuries at all 75 Stellantis factories and parts distribution centers in North America over the past 10 weeks.

A longtime Toledo worker recently told WTOL 11 that he had gone nearly a month without a single day off. “On a weekly basis, we’re being forced a 10th hour of overtime, some days being forced Saturdays, Sundays,” the worker said. “The longest I’ve worked straight? Roughly three and a half weeks.”

The worker, who withheld his identity to prevent being targeted by management and United Auto Workers officials, explained how exhaustion is directly fueling the surge in accidents. “Both the union and the company are ignoring the fact that workers are burnt out. People need time off. People need to see their families. People need to see their friends. They want to look forward to that weekend off, that one day off. It just isn’t happening.”

Inside the plant, workers are reporting a wave of injuries, near-misses and serious safety breakdowns. Michael, a Jeep worker interviewed by the *World Socialist Web Site*, said, “The team near mine has a job that has caused 3 injuries, and what did the company do to address the issue? They added more work to the station.”

He continued:

Being forced 6-7 days for two months at 9-10hr shifts breaks people down faster. The company responded by doing random safety audits so they could write people up for minor infractions and so they won’t be blamed for the increased injuries.

The emergency status is finally supposed to end after this week. It probably should’ve ended last week but then the company would have to give us two weekends off in a row.

Heaven forbid they reward us for making up the cars for them.

These conditions have been imposed while still no full explanation has been provided for the death of 53-year-old father of four, Antonio Gaston, who was killed inside the Toledo plant in August 2024. According to his family’s wrongful death lawsuit, Gaston was working alone, amid staffing shortages, on a machine whose protective safety guards were likely removed or bypassed “to prevent loss of production.” Fifteen months later, neither Stellantis nor the UAW has provided Jeep workers with an explanation of his death—even as the company challenges the \$16,000 fine imposed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Stellantis and the UAW have offered shifting explanations for emergency status. The company told WTOL the backlog was caused by a fire at the CSP plant in Carey, Ohio, which makes Jeep hardtops. Workers report management also cited two fires at the Novelis aluminum plant in Oswego, New York, claiming the loss of aluminum components halted production. The contradictory accounts underline that Stellantis has seized on these events as pretexts for nonstop forced overtime.

Michael explained how Stellantis inflated its claims of “lost units”: “JL (Jeep Wrangler) missed 4 days because of the parts issue caused by the fire. The total lost units were maximum 4,000, but the company claimed it was 5,200.”

He noted that Stellantis disregarded its own established procedures for calculating lost production. “About a year and a half ago we went on emergency status and the way they counted which units made up the lost units was completely different. This time they barely counted anything towards the 5,200 cars. I guess past practices don’t count here, even though it’s legally binding.”

The ability of the company to declare emergency status was authorized in the 2023 UAW–Stellantis contract, signed by UAW President Shawn Fain and the rest of the UAW bureaucracy. Section 88, Seven-Day Operations, allows continuous seven-day production and mandatory weekend work. Even more significant is the “Emergencies” Memorandum of Understanding contained in the Letters, Memoranda and Agreements, first introduced in 1985 when the UAW president sat on Chrysler’s Board of Directors.

It states: “The provisions of this Memorandum of Understanding that limit or restrict the right of the Company to require employees to work daily overtime or Saturdays or Sundays shall be suspended in any plant whose operations are interrupted by emergency situations, such as breakdowns, part shortages, strike, fire, tornado, flood or acts of God, for a period of time necessary to overcome such emergencies.” It continues: “There shall be no strike, picketing or other concerted activity with respect to any dispute arising out of this Memorandum of Understanding.”

Workers report that Toledo is not the only facility under emergency status. The Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) was placed on emergency status in July with the return of the HEMI engine, requiring all three shifts to work six to seven days a week.

The company has also routinely designates plants or parts of plants as “crucial to the integrated supply system of the Company” and “essential to meeting the scheduled production of one or more other plants or of customers.” This allows Stellantis to run them seven days a week for 90 days.

This directly exposes the fraud of UAW President Shawn Fain’s repeated claim that the 2023 national auto contract delivered a “better work-life balance” for autoworkers. There is no “work-life balance” in ten-hour shifts, seven-day weeks, emergency status or a plant responsible for 25 out of 87 injuries across all Stellantis facilities.

Fain’s slogan was designed to conceal the fact that the 2023 contract preserved and expanded the very forced-overtime provisions, seven-day operations clauses and emergency overtime memorandum the company is now using to abuse workers’ bodies.

The UAW bureaucracy which is enforcing this bears direct responsibility for the injuries and deaths. Fain’s bogus “stand up strike” and the sellout of the 2023 contract struggle were followed by two fatalities: Antonio Gaston at Jeep and Ronald Adams Sr., a 63-year-old skilled trades worker who was crushed to death at the nearby Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex in Michigan on April 7, 2025.

More than seven months later, Stellantis, the UAW and MIOSHA have disclosed nothing about the causes of Adams’ death to his widow and co-workers. Nevertheless the engine factory has been brought back to full production.

Conditions have worsened throughout the auto industry as Fain and the union apparatus collaborate with the Trump administration to impose tariffs on auto production in Canada, Mexico and other countries and “reshore” production to the US.

On October 14, Fain and UAW Stellantis Director Kevin Gotinsky hailed Stellantis’ decision to lay workers off in Canada and Mexico and “reshore” production to US plants. They praised Trump’s trade war measures and boasted that the move was a “massive investment” that would increase US output and employment.

UAW Local 12 officials are claiming that 900 workers of the 1,100 workers laid off last year will be brought back to Toledo when Stellantis launches a new mid-size truck at the plant in sometime in 2028. It is now clear under what conditions these workers will be returned: seven-day weeks, 10-hour days and

accelerating injuries in a plant already responsible for nearly one-third of Stellantis’ injuries in North America.

UAW Local 12, which is headed by President Brian Sims, is functioning as management’s tool. Michael described Local 12 Jeep Chairman Kentrail Fickling as entirely subordinate to management: “Kentrail our new chairman, since elected has been barely coming to work. So much that he now has enough points to be fired for attendance. Knowing that he should be fired, he has agreed to everything the company has asked for. As long as he keeps agreeing to do what the company wants, he keeps his job.”

The entire UAW bureaucracy, from Fain & Co. down to the local level, is enforcing these brutal conditions on behalf of management.

The lesson of Toledo is clear: Workers have to build rank-and-file committees to transfer power from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor or the injuries and deaths will continue—at Jeep, across Stellantis and the entire auto industry.

Rank-and-file committees must call for collective action to end emergency status immediately, stop mandatory overtime, enforce safe staffing, slow line speeds, document and publicize all injuries, expand the rank-and-file investigations of the deaths of Gaston and Adams and link with workers in other Stellantis plants and internationally.

The forced overtime, rising injuries and concealment of worker deaths are the product of a corporate-union structure enforcing a system that sacrifices workers’ lives for profit. Toledo Assembly Complex workers showed in March 2020 that they can act independently, when they occupied the Local 12 offices and forced a shutdown of the plant during the first stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. That same initiative is needed now, on a broader and more organized scale. Building rank-and-file committees is the only path to protect workers’ lives, expose the truth and challenge the deadly alliance of Stellantis, the UAW bureaucracy and the political establishment.

Join the fight for rank-and-file committees by clicking [here](#) and send us a report on conditions in your plant by filling out the form below. Your identity will be protected.



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