

Workers left in dark about fire that forced evacuation of General Motors Lansing Delta Township factory in Michigan

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On the morning of January 16, at approximately 3:30 a.m., multiple fire crews responded to a call at the General Motors Lansing Delta Township Assembly Plant following what appeared to be a fire-related incident. In a statement, General Motors said the incident occurred in the plant's body shop.

Both the body shop and the adjacent Lansing Regional Stamping facility were evacuated. It was reported that other facilities in the area continued operating as normal. According to GM, the evacuations were precautionary in nature, and no injuries or deaths have been reported at this time.

The fire was located on the roof of the structure; however, the cause of the fire has not yet been revealed. GM would also not reveal how long the evacuation lasted or how the fire affected production.

Although GM and other investigative authorities have released no information regarding the cause of the fire, workers commenting on Facebook provided additional details. One worker stated, "We were smelling something burning for hours, but they couldn't locate it. Finally, they found the source, which happened to be an HVAC duct. I could see the smoke, then finally the fire in the ceiling." The same worker said they waited outside the building for at least half an hour before being allowed to go to their cars.

Other workers in the comments section confirmed that the other buildings were not evacuated and that this would likely not cause any sort of slow down. As one worker stated, "*They don't stop unless they have to! It's all about the numbers...*"

What the comments make clear is that workers were deeply concerned about the condition of the plant and the safety of their coworkers and loved ones. One

former supervisor at the plant stated that they quit after realizing that "management doesn't care about the workers' safety or properly maintaining their equipment." Others expressed frustration over chronic maintenance failures, forcing workers to use outdated and unsafe equipment.

Another worker recalled a tornado that struck the plant two years ago. In August 2023, the National Weather Service issued an "Imminent Extreme Alert" warning of tornadoes across Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania and urging people to seek shelter immediately. The warnings covered multiple counties in Michigan, including areas with major auto plants and factories employing tens of thousands of workers.

As members of the GM Lansing and Flint Rank-and-file committees stated at the time, **these alerts and warnings were virtually ignored by both management and the United Auto Workers bureaucracy.** Everyone was kept on the line and things were continuing to run even in the face of the obvious danger from the approaching storms, prioritizing profits over the lives of the workers.

Many workers were kept on the line without even being made aware of the tornado warnings. In many factories and workshops, there are no internal systems that warn of approaching tornados, so workers are reliant on learning about it on breaks, or from outside sources. No one came to warn the workers on the line of the tornado warning and workers denounced the fact that management and the UAW kept them oblivious of the obvious danger.

In the case of the GM Lansing Assembly Plant, a tornado tore a wall off of the paint shop facility last year and workers were made to continue work as "the

wall that was ripped away wouldn't affect production" and were told to "keep working it's not a problem."

In the current fire incident, workers were again kept in the dark. As cited previously, workers noted smoke was detectable for hours before the source was identified. But many questions remained unanswered. What caused the HVAC duct to catch fire in that moment? Why did it take so long for management to look into why there was active smoke in the building? Why weren't all buildings evacuated and examined to ensure safety before workers were allowed back in? Was anything done to prevent this from occurring again?

These questions are urgent and central to workers' safety. Workers cannot entrust answers to the UAW apparatus, management, or state agencies such as MIOSHA—doing so would only guarantee another whitewash. Only a democratically elected, worker-controlled rank-and-file committee can gather the facts, conduct a thorough investigation, and develop a plan to prevent future incidents.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and its allied committees have initiated a series of independent investigations into recent workplace deaths and systemic safety failures. One notable example of this was the investigation into the death of Ronald Adams who was killed at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex in Michigan back in August of 2025. This was an independent worker-led inquiry that uncovered a pattern of preventable failures and cover-ups.

In another example, the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, under the IWA-RFC, recently launched an investigation of their own into the deaths of Nick Acker, Russell Scruggs Jr., Lucy Diaz and others. Calling on postal workers to submit testimony and documentary evidence and is assembling a worker-controlled dossier of facts and demands.

These workplace tragedies show that official investigatory bodies and corporatist unions cannot be relied on to protect lives. The IWA-RFC investigation demonstrates the necessity of worker-led, democratic rank-and-file committees that can preserve evidence, take testimony, insist on the shutdown of unsafe operations and link with workers internationally.

Workers at the GM Lansing Assembly Plant should build and expand the GM Lansing Workers Rank-and-

File Committee, to organize the fight for safety at the plant as part of the network already being established under the auspices of the IWA-RFC.

The Lansing Delta Township fire takes place in the context of an escalating assault on even the most minimal and inadequate, health, safety and environmental protections by the Trump administration in the interests of big business. US corporations increasingly view any safety regulations as an intolerable burden on profit. This attack is going hand and hand with the destruction of democratic rights, highlighted by the terrorization of workplaces and communities by federal immigration police.

If you have more information about this fire incident or would like to learn more, sign-up to get involved. (see form below) Start a rank-and-file committee in your workplace. Help us build and expand the IWA-RFC.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact