

# 53-year-old Flint worker crushed to death in scrap yard

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On February 6, an excavator crushed a 53-year-old worker to death at the RJ Industrial Recycling scrap yard in Flint, Michigan. According to the report filed by Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA), two workers were standing in the bucket of a front-end loader while attempting to reinstall a pin on an excavator arm.

While the pair worked, a third worker, the operator of the front-end loader, went to start and move the excavator arm to assist the reinstallation. During this operation, the excavator cab and arm rotated, pinning one of the two workers between the excavator arm and the bucket. The worker was transported to the local Hurley Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

Strategically located amid the shuttered and torn down auto plants of Flint, RJ Industrial boasts that it has “become a national leader in asset recovery, demolition, and metal recycling for the automotive, railroad, shipping, energy, and general manufacturing industries.”

In 2023, the company, also known as RJ Torching, reached a settlement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and paid \$150,000 in civil penalties for violations of the Clean Air Act. Under a consent decree, the company agreed to install a pollution capture and control system at its Flint facility to reduce visible emissions of inhalable metallic particulate matter.

According to media reports, MIOSHA is in the process of investigating the death and has not yet released any additional information. This death is the second this year in Michigan’s industrial slaughterhouse.

On January 10, 26-year-old Daniel Evans, a J&A Towing of Belding tow truck helper, sustained fatal

injuries after a tow truck flatbed pinned him against the truck’s cab, crushing him. According to MIOSHA reports, Evans and an unnamed man were delivering a scrapped forklift to the Greenville Steel Inc. recycling center in Greenville, Michigan.

After unloading the forklift, the pair attempted to return the flatbed from its ramped position, when the machinery encountered resistance. Presumably, while attempting to address the issue, Evans sustained what MIOSHA vaguely refers to as a “fatal head injury after becoming caught between the carriage and the cab.” The injury left Evans lying on the ground, where he was found by emergency responders, who pronounced him dead on the scene.

The inspection and reinstallation of pins in excavators is a routine maintenance task in heavy machinery industries. Such maintenance operations, as with all workplace operations, should not result in injury or fatality if proper safety standards are in place. Far from anomalies or individual mistakes by workers, Evans and the unnamed Flint scrapyards worker are victims of the capitalist subordination of life for profit.

In Michigan alone, these conditions killed 44 workers in 2025, 10 more than in the previous year, amounting to a near-30 percent increase. In 2023, the official Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 5,283 fatal workplace injuries and 135,304 from occupational diseases, averaging 385 deaths daily.

The suppressed information surrounding the deaths of Evans and the unnamed Flint worker is intended to nullify mass outrage against the social conditions driving these incidents. Official investigations present false guarantees that workplace deaths will be thoroughly examined, covering the crimes of US capitalism with layers of red tape.

Such inquiries often stretch on for months or years,

during which time families and coworkers receive little information. When findings are eventually released, they result in limited penalties that leave the conditions leading to the fatal incident largely unchanged. Throughout the process, production continues, corporate operations remain uninterrupted and official reviews serve to contain scrutiny rather than to address the causes of workplace deaths.

February marks 10 months since the rushed retooling at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex in Michigan resulted in an overhead gantry crane brutally crushing and killing 63-year-old machine repairman Ronald Adams Sr. while performing maintenance on an industrial washer inside an enclosed factory cell.

Stellantis and the United Auto Workers, of which Adams was a member, remain deafeningly silent, as production quickly resumed at Dundee as if nothing had happened. Meanwhile, facilitating the cover-up, MIOSHA has refused to release its probe into the April 7 fatality. Earlier this month, a MIOSHA spokesman told the WSWs that the “case is still open.”

Testimony gathered by an independent inquiry by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) revealed the lack of any serious lockout/tagout procedures in the factory. After Adams’ death, contractors who programmed the industrial washer and gantry were never interviewed by official investigators, and workers were ordered to be silent.

Workers at RJ Industrial Recycling in Flint who have information on this industrial murder and other violations of workers’ rights to safe working conditions should write in to the IWA-RFC Newsletter. The only way workers can protect themselves against the threat of injury and death is through the relentless exposure of these violations and the building of rank-and-file safety committees that put workplace operations under workers’ control and oversight.



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