

One year since the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr.: Family demands answers as MIOSHA investigation blocked

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One year ago today, Ronald Adams Sr. went to work and did not come home. The 63-year-old skilled trades worker—a machine repairman with 19 years at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex in Southeast Michigan—was performing maintenance on an industrial washer in the early morning hours of April 7, 2025, when an overhead gantry crane suddenly activated without warning, plunging down with massive force and crushing his upper torso. He was pronounced dead at Trinity Health Ann Arbor. He is survived by his wife, Shamenia Stewart-Adams, his children and his grandchildren.

Twelve months have now passed. Stellantis has not been held accountable. The United Auto Workers has issued no demands for accountability. And the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA), which opened an investigation the day Adams died, has still not released its findings. His family has received not a letter, not a phone call, not a single word of official explanation.

“A year has passed and no information has been provided to our family,” Shamenia Stewart-Adams told the WSW. Her family, she said, is honoring Ronald’s memory—and “we will not stop demanding the truth.”

A year of silence, a year of cover-up

According to the autopsy report, obtained by the WSW through a Freedom of Information Act request, Adams sustained catastrophic injuries: 18 of his 24 ribs were broken, his sternum was crushed, he suffered spinal fractures, and roughly 20 percent of his blood volume was found in his lungs. A surgeon who reviewed the report told the WSW that the trauma was comparable to injuries sustained in an airplane crash or a combat explosion. A 63-year-old man went to work to repair a machine and was killed as if on a battlefield.

The only serious investigation into the conditions that produced this death was carried out not by MIOSHA, nor by the UAW, nor by Stellantis, but by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which presented its initial findings at a public hearing in Detroit on July 27, 2025. What that investigation uncovered was damning. Workers testified that management, with the acquiescence of the UAW, had circulated “cheater keys”—devices that trick safety gates into registering as closed, bypassing lockout/tagout (LOTO) protections entirely.

After Adams’ death, plant management ordered the keys returned, threatening workers with termination. Popcorn tins were placed around the plant to collect them. One tin outside the UAW local union office was

reportedly half full. A former OSHA compliance officer who reviewed the findings told the WSW that conditions at Dundee amounted to virtually no functioning lockout/tagout system—and that the scale of the violations approached criminal negligence.

Workers also reported that signs indicating lockout points on machines—known as placards—were never updated after the gantry was physically relocated within the plant. A worker could believe a machine was locked out when it was not. Meanwhile, contractors from Fives Cinetic, who programmed the washer and gantry system, and who could have examined its fault history and determined exactly what signal caused it to activate while Adams was inside, were never contacted by Stellantis, the UAW or MIOSHA. The control boards that held that data have since been restarted, and the information may be gone.

In the immediate aftermath of Adams’ death, management and UAW officials brought the incoming shift into the plant auditorium, locked the doors, and instructed workers to say nothing. Workers who tried to contact the Adams family received anonymous threats. Local UAW officials issued vague statements, while the UAW International published only a perfunctory mention of Adams’ death—buried at the bottom of a Workers Memorial Day post nearly two weeks after he was killed. On the very day Adams was laid to rest, the UAW and Stellantis jointly posted a video touting their “partnership” on workplace safety.

MIOSHA stonewalled—and admits it

Asked by the WSW to explain why its investigation into the death of Ronald Adams Sr. remains incomplete after a full year, a MIOSHA spokesperson offered the following: “The length of time required to complete a fatality investigation can vary depending on the complexity of the case and the ability to obtain necessary information. In some instances, MIOSHA must pursue additional legal or administrative steps to obtain information, which can extend the timeline. These factors are outside of MIOSHA’s direct control.”

This statement requires plain translation. “Additional legal or administrative steps to obtain information” means that someone has refused to provide it voluntarily. MIOSHA has been compelled to seek compulsory disclosure—meaning that a party to this investigation, in all likelihood Stellantis or the UAW or both, has refused to cooperate through normal channels. The WSW asked MIOSHA to specify the nature of the obstruction and to identify the parties responsible. It received no substantive answer. Letters were sent to both Stellantis and the UAW requesting comment. Neither responded.

“I don’t want this to happen to another family”

The death of Ronald Adams Sr. was not an isolated incident. His death is part of a pattern of eliminated safety guards, bypassed lockout procedures, accelerated production timelines, and the systematic subordination of workers’ lives to quarterly output targets.

Seven months before Adams was killed, 53-year-old Antonio Gaston was crushed to death on the assembly line at Stellantis’ Toledo Assembly Complex, with workers charging that the company had deliberately removed safety guarding from a conveyor, exposing workers to pinch points. OSHA eventually cited Stellantis for a serious safety violation and imposed a fine of \$16,000—minutes of profit for a corporation of Stellantis’ scale. Stellantis appealed even that.

Gaston’s widow, Renita Shores-Gaston, filed a wrongful death lawsuit in August 2025, saying she still had not been told the truth about how her husband died. “It was the hardest day of my entire life to hear that news,” she said, “and then to have to call my children and tell them that their dad died at work.”

Less than three weeks ago, on March 16, 2026, Gregory Knopf—a 64-year-old plumber and pipe fitter at Ford Motor Company’s Sharonville Transmission Plant in Ohio—was killed when a press machine activated during routine maintenance and pinned him against equipment. His death bears a direct and grim resemblance to the death of Ronald Adams Sr.: a skilled tradesman, performing maintenance, killed by machinery that should have been locked out.

Knopf is survived by his wife, three children, and eight grandchildren. His daughter Miranda remembered him as selfless. His son Corey called him the best man he knew.

Shamenia Stewart-Adams, on this first anniversary of her husband’s death, said she extends her solidarity and deepest sympathy to Renita Shores-Gaston and to the family of Gregory Knopf. “I don’t want this to happen to another family. No wife should be left without answers. No child should grow up without knowing why their father did not come home.”

She concluded, “I encourage workers not to be afraid to speak out and stand up to defend the lives and you and your co-workers. I especially appeal to workers at the Dundee plant to come forward with information about the conditions in the factory.”

“Workers must assert control”

Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker running for UAW president, issued the following statement marking the first anniversary of the death of Ronald Adams Sr.:

One year ago, Ronald Adams Sr. was killed because the safety systems designed to protect him had been systematically dismantled—with cheater keys, incorrect placards, bypassed lockout procedures—and the union that was supposed to represent him stood by and said nothing. Today, MIOSHA has still not released its investigation results. Stellantis and the UAW refused to answer questions from Adams’ family and co-workers. That is not a coincidence. That is a cover-up—and it must end now. I am calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the

MIOSHA investigation results, and for the full disclosure of every act of obstruction by Stellantis and by the UAW that has delayed this investigation for twelve months.

But the deaths of Ronald Adams Sr., Antonio Gaston, and Gregory Knopf make something else absolutely clear. We cannot wait for Stellantis to act. We cannot wait for the UAW bureaucracy to act. We cannot wait for MIOSHA. Every day workers remain dependent on a union apparatus that enforces management’s production dictates rather than protecting our lives, more workers will be killed. The only answer is for workers on every shop floor to build rank-and-file safety committees—democratically controlled, answerable to workers ourselves and not to management, with the real power to halt production over unsafe conditions and the authority to conduct our own independent investigations. Workers must assert control over safety and production ourselves. No one else will do it for us.

For a full year, the UAW bureaucracy under Shawn Fain has issued no public demand for accountability from Stellantis over the death of Ronald Adams Sr. It has made no public demand of MIOSHA. It moved as quickly as possible to resume full production at Dundee Engine. The plant now runs three shifts, producing engines on the site where Adams was killed, with UAW approval.

These deaths are not accidents. They are the predictable, measurable product of the capitalist system. The US Department of Labor reported that 5,070 workers were killed on the job in 2024. That figure itself vastly understates the true toll, as it excludes most deaths from occupational illness—the AFL-CIO estimates that workplace disease claims an additional 135,000 lives annually. Across American industry, roughly 15 workers die on the job every single day.

Our lives are sacrificed for corporate profit, and the institutions that are supposed to protect us—the unions, the regulatory agencies, and the corporations themselves—participate in the cover-up when things go wrong. Now Trump makes the agenda plain: gut OSHA, defund every protection workers have, and pour the money into war. This slaughter must stop. Workers must stop it. The life of Ronald Adams Sr. demands it. The lives of every worker who will go to work tomorrow demand it.

The ruling class sacrifices lives for profit

The killing of Ronald Adams Sr. did not occur in a vacuum. For decades, Democrats and Republicans alike have overseen the gutting of workplace protections while handing endless sums to the rich and expanding the machinery of war. Under the Trump administration this class policy has entered a new and more openly ruthless stage.

Since taking office, the administration has moved to destroy what remains of even minimal federal protections for workers. It has frozen new rulemaking—including a proposed heat illness and injury prevention standard—slashed inspection staffing to historically low levels, and rolled out the so-called “OSHA Cares” program, replacing enforcement and penalties with “voluntary compliance” by employers.

Workplace inspections fell by 20 percent in the first six months of 2025 compared to the prior year. The administration’s proposed FY2026 budget would cut OSHA’s overall funding by 8 percent, eliminate 223 staff positions—primarily compliance officers—and project a 30 percent reduction in inspections.

Just days ago, Trump’s FY2027 budget request proposed \$1.5 trillion

for military spending—a 40 percent increase over already record Pentagon outlays, and the largest such request in modern history—arriving as the administration wages war against Iran. To finance it, the administration proposes \$73 billion in cuts to domestic programs, including further reductions to an already eviscerated OSHA, cuts to housing, health care and education, and the explicit targeting of core social programs.

At a closed Easter lunch last week, Trump stated with blunt clarity: “Don’t send any money for day care. ... We’re fighting wars. We can’t take care of day care,” and went further: “It’s not possible for us to take care of day care, Medicaid, Medicare. ... We have to take care of one thing: military protection.” The logic is undisguised: every dollar that might fund a safety inspector, a heat standard or a lockout/tagout enforcement action—every protection that might have kept Ronald Adams Sr. alive—is to be redirected to feed the war machine. Workers are to be sacrificed twice: first on the shop floor, then on the battlefield.

Ronald Adams Sr. was a husband, father and grandfather. He was a skilled tradesman who worked at Dundee for 19 years, who knew machines, who cared about safety, who was respected by coworkers and loved by his family. He went to work in the early hours of April 7, 2025 and was killed because a corporation treated his life as expendable, because a union bureaucracy treated his death as an inconvenience, and because a regulatory apparatus—shaped by the priorities of corporate-controlled parties—bows to the dictates of profit.

Adams’ family is still waiting. They deserve the truth. So do the workers who will go to work today at Dundee, at Toledo, at Sharonville and at every plant in America and around the world where the same conditions exist and the same catastrophe waits.

The defense of workers’ lives cannot be left to the parties of big business or the agencies they oversee. It requires a political struggle for a society organized around social need and the rights of the working class—including the most basic right of all: the right to life, health and a safe workplace.



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