# 1 year since the IWA-RFC hearing on the death of Ronald Adams Sr.: MIOSHA still silent as industrial toll mounts

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One year ago, on July 27, 2025, approximately 100 workers, young people and family members gathered at the Marygrove Campus in Detroit for a public hearing of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which presented its initial findings of its independent investigation into the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr.

Adams, a 63-year-old skilled tradesman known to his coworkers as the "protector of the plant," was crushed to death on April 7, 2025, when an overhead gantry crane suddenly activated while he performed maintenance at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex south of Detroit.

More than 15 months later, the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) has still not released the findings of its investigation. Contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site* last week, a MIOSHA spokesperson would say only that the "case remains open." Stellantis and the United Auto Workers apparatus have also maintained a wall of silence.

At last year's hearing, Adams' widow, Shamenia Stewart-Adams, said she had received "no answers from MIOSHA or the UAW. Not a letter, not a call, not a single word explaining why or how this happened." A year later, nothing has changed, except that more workers have been killed or injured in entirely preventable tragedies.

The IWA-RFC hearing stood in stark contrast to the cover-up by the company, the UAW bureaucracy and state authorities. Lawrence Porter, a leader of the Socialist Equality Party and former autoworker, chaired the meeting, denouncing a system that treats the annual deaths of 140,000 US workers from injuries and occupational disease as the "cost of doing business." These deaths, he said, were "casualties in a class war." "We are here to sound the call: Workers' lives matter!"

The main report was delivered by Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania, an IWA-RFC leader and a candidate for UAW president in this year's election. "No single worker, however committed or experienced, can guarantee safety under a system where profit is prioritized over human life," Lehman said. Adams' death "was not simply an accident. It was a crime—a preventable tragedy resulting directly from the capitalist system in which it took place."

Citing the toll of 15 workers killed daily in the US and nearly 3 million killed globally each year, he called for rank-and-file safety committees in every plant to fight for the principle "that no job should be carried out unless and until it is made safe"—the perspective embodied in the resolution adopted unanimously at the hearing's close.

Shamenia Stewart-Adams, the widow of Ronald Adams Sr., received a standing ovation as she spoke "not just as a grieving wife, but as a voice for every mother, every wife, every family who has watched their loved one walk out the door for work, trusting that they will return home safely."

She implored Adams' coworkers to come forward. "I know some of you have been threatened… But I am asking you with everything in me to find the courage to come forward," she said. "Because what happened to my husband can happen again, to any one of you."

The campaign of intimidation was waged jointly by management and the UAW apparatus to cover up their own responsibility for Adams' death. Dundee workers attended the hearing in defiance of threats of retaliation.

An audio message from "John," an injured Dundee worker, described the "chaos" of launch periods when "safety is out the window." "We're just like slaves," he said. "If we were in control—the workers—we'd stop the line."

The investigation's findings, drawn from dozens of interviews, exposed what the official agencies would not touch. It revealed that the retooling of the plant for new engine production was more than a year behind schedule, and management—with the acquiescence of the UAW—systematically bypassed safety protocols in the rush

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to accelerate the launch.

Lockout/tagout protections were routinely bypassed with “cheater keys” distributed by management, which quietly ordered them returned after Adams’ death under threat of termination. A Fives Cinetic programmer who worked with Adams on the washer-gantry system—and offered a technical explanation of how it may have received a false ready signal—was never interviewed by Stellantis, the UAW or MIOSHA.

The bureaucracy’s role was epitomized by Kevin Gotinsky, director of the UAW Stellantis Department and Shawn Fain’s hand-picked candidate for UAW vice president for Stellantis in this year’s election. On April 28, 2025—Workers Memorial Day, the very day hundreds gathered in Detroit to bury Adams—the UAW posted a video featuring Gotinsky alongside two Stellantis executives. It said nothing about Adams. Instead, it praised the “joint efforts” of the company and union to create a “safe workplace,” with Gotinsky declaring that safe decisions were ultimately the responsibility of “every UAW member” and Stellantis manufacturing chief Tim Fallon asserting that “unsafe acts are a leading cause of injury”—blaming workers’ shortcuts, not the prioritizing of profit over safety.

WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North told the meeting that tragedies recurring with such “staggering regularity” were not accidents but “the operation of necessity”—the product of a social system that will keep producing them until it is replaced.

Every warning issued at the public hearing has since been confirmed. On March 16, 2026, Gregory Knopf, 61, was crushed to death at Ford’s Sharonville Transmission Plant in Ohio when a press machine undergoing routine maintenance suddenly activated—a virtual replay of the Dundee killing.

This month, smoke from the Canadian wildfires gave Metro Detroit the worst air quality of any major city on the planet, yet tens of thousands of autoworkers were ordered into smoke-filled plants, where workers sickened and collapsed from the combined effects of heat and toxic air. Fain—under federal criminal investigation and facing reelection—waited more than 24 hours before merely “urging” employers to protect workers.

UAW Vice President Rich Boyer, also a candidate for the union presidency, sent Stellantis locals a letter on July 17—the day Detroit topped the global pollution rankings—claiming UAW Industrial Hygienists had verified that air quality “remains within acceptable limits.” His advice to workers with respiratory conditions was to “notify their supervisor.” Workers, not the apparatus, took the initiative, bringing fans into the plants and alerting local media, while the IWA-RFC demanded the shutdown of all non-essential workplaces with full pay.

Marking the anniversary, Lehman issued the following statement:

> One year ago, we gathered in Detroit because Ronald Adams’ family and coworkers refused to accept silence as an answer. Everything we said at that hearing has been confirmed. If workers had not carried out our own investigation, everything about Ronald’s death would already be buried.
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> We warned that unless workers took health and safety into our own hands, the deaths would continue. Gregory Knopf was crushed to death at Ford Sharonville when a press activated during maintenance—virtually the same way Ronald was killed. To those in charge, these deaths are a cost of doing business, and the fines are cheaper than the fixes.
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> The wildfire smoke showed millions of workers exactly where they stand. While the public was warned to stay indoors, we were ordered to keep the line running. Boyer certified that the air in smoke-filled plants was “within acceptable limits.” That letter tells you what the UAW’s joint safety machinery exists for. It does not protect workers from the company; it protects the company from workers, producing paperwork that declares poisoned air contractually acceptable so production never stops.
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> No one is coming to save us—not MIOSHA, not the courts, not Solidarity House. Workers have enormous power, because we produce everything of value in society, but only if we organize independently. The danger of our inaction remains greater than the danger of us acting in our own interests. Form rank-and-file safety committees with the authority to stop the line, and contact the IWA-RFC to join the fight we launched one year ago. That is how we ensure Ronald Adams Sr. did not die in vain.

To join the rank-and-file investigation or report unsafe conditions in your workplace, contact the IWA-RFC.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**

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