

Forklift accident leaves worker with “life-altering” injuries at General Motors Flint Truck Assembly; workers told to keep line moving

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If you have information about what happened to the Flint GM worker on the box line early Thursday morning, or about safety conditions at your plant, the WSWs and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees want to hear from you. Your identity will be protected.

A worker at GM Flint Truck Assembly was severely injured after being hit by a forklift going in reverse on the third shift between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. on August 13. The worker’s name has not yet been released, but according to a worker at the plant contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site* she was 71 years old and had just signed her retirement papers last week.

Many workers came to the injured worker’s aid. However, they were forced to keep the line moving after watching this horrendous accident even as the worker lay on the floor bleeding and waiting for paramedics and the ambulance to arrive to take her to Hurley Hospital in Flint. The injured worker has since been transferred to the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor.

On Thursday morning Eric Welter, United Auto Workers Local 598 shop chairman at the plant, issued a statement on the accident via the internal app used by the union to communicate with workers. Welter oddly referred to the worker as a “pedestrian.” He reported, “This morning we had a major incident involving a forklift and a pedestrian up on the box line. The pedestrian is severely injured, many of the workers in her area came to her aid. As a result they were able to get her to the emergency responders and transported to Hurley. She was coherent and talking but has a long road.”

Welter called for prayers and unity but made no mention of the unsafe conditions caused by increased line speeds throughout the complex that produces the profitable heavy-duty trucks Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra. A worker

reported to the WSWs that the line speed this year is running about 380 trucks per shift compared to 280 last year. The plant just recorded production of its 16 millionth truck.

Workers reported that 10-minute safety meetings were held with each department on every shift Thursday after the accident. Beginning with first shift Thursday morning, the meetings were led by management, with union officials standing alongside the plant’s business manager. Workers were told the worker had suffered “life-altering injuries.”

A worker observed that workers at his safety meeting are very shaken up and distraught, “but not nearly as distraught as the workers who witnessed the terrible event.”

Third shift workers at Flint Truck reported to the WSWs that a worker from the box line was “backed over by a forklift, severing one of her legs and badly mangling the other.” Another worker told the WSWs, “I heard the forklift was moving in reverse, the driver was looking back over one shoulder and the woman may have been in his blind spot on the other side.”

A Facebook post described the accident, “A lady walking this morning inside the plant got hit by a guy driving a forklift truck and he had earbuds in and could not hear her screaming; drug her all the way down the aisle and it ripped her leg off.”

It appears that no adequately trained staff were on site to handle the medical emergency. “...listen to this, the security team who takes care of emergencies in here didn’t know how to tie a tourniquet, so a guy on the line took his shirt off and tied the tourniquet,” according to a Facebook post.

As of this writing, there has been no report by the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MiOSHA). According to MiOSHA guidelines, GM would have 24 hours to report a hospitalization or amputation. An inspector is supposed to go on site within 10 calendar days to investigate after receiving the assignment.

Local 598 officials did not return calls from the WSWs.

Upon hearing the news workers posted many comments online attesting to the large number of forklift accidents. “Damnit man, they’ll try to keep that quiet. My husband drives one at Nissan and the amount of injuries at that place is just insane, but they are never reported to the public.” And another, “My fiancée was almost hit by a forklift truck at his job recently too.”

In July, GM Flint Assembly along with many other assembly and parts plants throughout Michigan filled up with toxic smoke resulting from the Canadian wildfires. Workers collapsed on the line and were taken to hospitals, while the UAW kept production running. the UAW took no action while ensuring production kept running. As anger mounted, UAW President Shawn Fain finally issued a statement calling on “employers to put health and safety of all workers first,” while proposing to do nothing.

The WSWs has documented numerous forklift-related incidents at UAW-represented facilities. They follow a consistent pattern: untrained or rushed operators, speed-up, management scapegoating of workers and UAW silence.

Stellantis Sterling Stamping Plant (July 2025). A veteran worker died after falling from a forklift and suffering severe head injuries. He was hospitalized for nearly two weeks before his death. UAW Local 1264 posted a death notice on Facebook that pointedly omitted any mention that the death was work-related. Workers told the WSWs that safety is “all for show” and that forklift operators routinely “bulldoze two racks of parts or more, pushing it right up in front of you” when they’re only supposed to move one at a time.

Ford Dearborn Truck Plant — Rouge Complex (August 2024). A forklift driver who had been rushed into the job at shift change without adequate training pierced an overhead water main, unleashing a torrent that flooded the trim department. It was the second time in eight weeks the same pipe was ruptured.

The previous driver was given 30 days off without pay as a scapegoat; UAW Local 600 “folded its hands and did nothing.” Workers reported: “They keep putting operators on forklifts that do not know the job. They are not trained for the job and have no orientation.”

Metalsa, Elizabethtown, Kentucky (June 2022). A 24-year-old worker was killed in a forklift accident at this auto parts supplier. Workers later told the Will Lehman campaign that the company and union were “sweeping it under the rug.”

Metalsa, suburban Detroit (October 2022). Dayzia Kelly, a 25-year-old female worker, died in October 2022. According to the MiOSHA report, while negotiating a turn the “powered industrial truck tipped over and fell onto the

victim.”

Dana Toledo plant (September 2021). A worker was crushed and severely injured when a forklift accidentally ran over him. “This place is like a jail or a prison,” a worker told the WSWs.

These deaths and severe injuries are only the tip of the iceberg. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) publicly reported at least 87 fatal occupational injuries in motor vehicle, body and trailer, and parts manufacturing from 2021 through 2024. A separate WSWs review found 52 deaths in OSHA fatality-inspection records from 2021 to the present, although that database covers only inspected cases and is published with a substantial delay.

These preventable tragedies are the result of the insatiable drive for profit by the auto manufacturers with the collusion of the UAW. Ford, GM and Stellantis have for decades slashed skilled trades classifications, eliminated preventative maintenance programs and intensified the pace of production through speedup and understaffing, while cutting training.

The UAW-management joint safety apparatus at the auto plants does not protect workers. Just the opposite—it certifies that unsafe conditions are contractually acceptable and scapegoats workers for any deaths or injuries, absolving management of any responsibility.

In the most recent industrial tragedy involving a member of the United Auto Workers, James Brasher, 57, died August 1, 2026, at Stellantis Mopar Parts Distribution Center, Center Line, MI. With over 30 years seniority, he fell 25 feet into a dumpster while clearing out a facility condemned to close under the 2023 “historic” contract. He was the fourth Big Three worker killed under the 2023 contract, and at least the 16th UAW member killed on the job since 2022.

Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker and socialist running for UAW president, declared after the death of James Brasher, said workers must “take health and safety into our own hands” by creating committees with the “power to shut down production until we decide conditions are safe enough to work.”



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