

Family and coworkers to hold memorial service for James Brasher, third Stellantis worker killed under UAW 2023 sellout contract

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Family, friends and coworkers will gather Saturday at the Kaul Funeral Home in St. Clair Shores, Michigan, to memorialize James Brasher, the 57-year-old Stellantis worker killed on the job August 1 at the company's Mopar Parts Distribution Center in Center Line.

Brasher, a member of United Auto Workers Local 1248 with more than 30 years seniority, was discarding decommissioned office furniture and equipment through a roll-up door on the second floor of the building when he fell 25 feet into a trash dumpster below. Center Line Public Safety Director Paul Myszenski said it appeared Brasher was killed instantly from head injuries.

Neither the company, the UAW nor the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) have released any further information of the workplace fatality.

James leaves behind a wife, Karyn, a daughter, Sabrina, his mother, Tina-Marie and his brother, Erik, according to an obituary on the funeral home's website. It also noted that "Jim devoted 33 years of his life to his job at Stellantis, formerly Chrysler/FCA, where he worked until the day of his passing. He was a member of UAW Local 1248 and was an incredibly hard worker who was well-respected by the coworkers and friends he came to know over more than three decades. Many of those relationships grew far beyond the workplace into lasting friendships."

A GoFundMe page organized by a family friend describes Brasher as "the kind of person who made this world better simply by being in it. If someone needed help, he was there. He would give you the shirt off his back without a second thought." The fundraiser was established to support Brasher's wife Karyn, who the site notes is facing "an incredibly serious medical battle" and "a long and difficult road ahead that will require extensive treatment, recovery, and ongoing care." Donations are being raised for funeral

expenses, lost income, medical bills, gaps in insurance coverage: the realities that confront the families of the more than 5,000 workers killed on the job in the United States every year.

Brasher was the third Stellantis worker and fourth Detroit Three autoworker killed since the UAW bureaucracy, headed by President Shawn Fain and Vice President Richard Boyer, rammed through the sellout 2023 contract that they hailed as "historic."

The tragedy is the direct outcome of the deal, which sanctioned the closure of 19 US facilities, including half of all Stellantis parts distribution centers. The Center Line building—once the national headquarters of Mopar—was sold in January 2025 and is being leased back until the opening of a \$388 million automated Detroit Mega Hub in 2027. The new Amazon-style facility near the Detroit Metropolitan Airport will eliminate hundreds of jobs through automation. Brasher was dumping discarded furniture and equipment from one of the 10 PDC facilities already condemned to close. In other words, he was cleaning out the remains of a parts depot the UAW had signed away.

The agreement also sanctioned the slashing of thousands of jobs, long hours of forced overtime and speed up, which have created deadly conditions in the plants.

On August 21, 2024—two years ago to the day before Saturday's memorial service—Antonio Gaston, a 53-year-old father of four, was crushed to death at the Stellantis Toledo Assembly Complex when he was caught under a vehicle moving on the assembly line. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fined Stellantis \$16,000 for "serious violations," including the failure to ensure that pinch points on the chassis delivery conveyor were properly guarded. Stellantis challenged the fine and it was reduced to \$11,000.

On April 7, 2025, Ronald Adams Sr., a 63-year-old

machine repairman known to his coworkers as “the protector of the plant,” was crushed to death at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex when an overhead gantry crane suddenly activated during maintenance. Sixteen months later, neither the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA), nor Stellantis, nor the UAW has released a single finding. In more than a year months since her husband’s death, Adams’s widow, Shamenia Stewart-Adams, has received not one letter, not one call, not one explanation.

The only real investigation into Adams’s death was conducted by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). Drawing on dozens of worker interviews, the IWA-RFC found that management, with UAW collaboration, had distributed “cheater keys” that bypassed lockout/tagout protections that would have prevented the gantry from operating. The retooling of the factory was already more than a year behind schedule and the company was rushing to launch a new line of engines.

According to a lawsuit filed by Stewart-Adams, equipment safety guards were also removed or never properly installed including: hard-wired electronic sensor interlocks on machine doors, covers and hatches; physical safe zone limit switches; safety relays designed to fail safe and light curtains or area scanners to detect personnel in hazardous areas.

Ford and GM workers have also been victims.

On March 16, 2026, Gregory Knopf, a 64-year-old pipefitter and father of three at Ford’s Sharonville Transmission Plant in Ohio, was killed when a press machine activated during routine maintenance — a virtual replay of Adams’s death.

Earlier this month, on August 13, a worker at the GM Flint Assembly Plant who had just signed her retirement papers was severely injured when a forklift backed over her, reportedly severing one leg and badly mangling the other. Workers were told to keep the line moving as she lay bleeding on the floor.

“No Common Denominator”

Faced with this mounting death toll, Fain and Boyer issued a joint statement expressing condolences and saying, the “UAW will investigate and demand details from the company of exactly how this tragedy occurred to ensure this kind of accident never happens again.”

But such an investigation, if it happens at all, will only be another whitewash of corporate management and the UAW apparatus.

In recent *Detroit Comments News*, the UAW Department Director Richard Boyer said the union previously promised to look into the Gaston and Adams cases, “though it has not released findings in those cases, and Boyer said he wasn’t sure what their status was.” Boyer then said there did not appear to be a “common denominator” tying the three Stellantis deaths together.

This is a blatant cover-up. The common denominator is immediately apparent to any worker on the shop floor: speed-up, job cuts, cost-cutting, the subordination of safety to production targets, and the collusion of a UAW bureaucracy that functions as an arm of corporate management.

It is the “emergency status” provision in the 2023 contract that forces workers onto nine-to-ten-hour shifts, six to seven days a week. It is the systematic bypassing of lockout/tagout protections documented by the IWA-RFC. It is the closure of facilities and the concentration of work onto fewer and fewer workers.

At the July 30 UAW presidential candidate debate, Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker and socialist running against Fain, alone raised the toll of dead workers. “Every year in this country, more than 5,000 workers die on the job because safety is subordinated to profit,” Lehman said. “In our plants, Antonio Gaston, Ronald Adams Sr., Gregory Knopf were crushed to death under the 2023 contract that this leadership called ‘historic.’” Two days later, James Brasher was dead.

In a statement following Brasher’s death, Lehman declared that workers must “take health and safety into our own hands” by forming rank-and-file committees with the power to shut down production until conditions are safe.

Brasher’s family and co-workers deserve the truth. That will not come from Stellantis, from MIOSHA, or from a UAW bureaucracy that has made itself the personnel department of the auto companies. It will come only when rank-and-file workers, organized in committees under their own democratic control, take the fight for safety into their own hands—and wage a political struggle against the capitalist system that sacrifices human life to corporate profit every single day.



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