

Maintenance worker crushed to death at Kaiser Aluminum plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan

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Andrew “Andy” Nelson Block, a 43 year old maintenance worker, was killed at the Kaiser Aluminum manufacturing plant located in Kalamazoo, Michigan on August 18.

Preliminary information from the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) said Block was “welding inside a pneumatically powered scrap chute when its clamshell closed, causing his fatal injuries.” Local news media reported that coworkers attempted CPR and used a defibrillator before first responders arrived.

While the one sentence preliminary information on Block’s death is available on the MIOSHA website, the government agency issued another boilerplate statement saying it was investigating the death and that “this type of investigation may take several weeks or months to complete.”

Andy Block was born and raised in Kalamazoo. He was an alumnus of Gull Lake High School and graduated in 2002.

According to the obituary published by his family, Andy Block was a dedicated employee at Kaiser Aluminum who served for many years as a maintenance lead. The statement went on, “Andy had an extraordinary ability to figure things out—a natural problem solver and innovative thinker. He remained calm, rational, and steady in even the most challenging situations. He loved to tinker and taught himself to repair just about anything, often finding practical solutions where others saw only obstacles.”

His family also wrote, “Above all else, Andy adored his family, especially his daughters, Evelyn and Maggie. He loved teaching them archery, taking them fishing, and sharing with them the beauty and wonder

of the great outdoors. He cherished the quieter, playful moments just as much from painting fingernails to playing dollhouse—and found tremendous joy being with his girls.”

The Kaiser Aluminum facility in Kalamazoo employs as many as 300 workers. According to corporate information, the Kaiser plant produces soft alloy extrusions and cast aluminum products for the aerospace, defense, auto and transportation, packaging and general industrial industries.

Kaiser Aluminum is a multibillion-dollar producer of semi-fabricated aluminum products such as aluminum plate, sheet and coil, extrusions, tubes, rod, bar and wire for aircraft, defense manufacturers, packaging, automotive and industrial equipment.

Kaiser, founded in 1946 and based in Franklin, Tennessee, has a \$2.56 billion market value. It is the fifth-largest aluminum manufacturer in the US. The company has two previous violations reported by MIOSHA since 2025, with one pointing to amputation hazards.

While MIOSHA has emphasized that the initial reporting is preliminary and does not constitute the findings of a completed investigation, the known circumstances of Block’s death raise fundamental safety questions, including how a machine could energize and cycle while a worker is working inside of it.

As of this reporting no public statement has been issued by the United Steel Workers (USW) or its local 2-1011. Only the company provided a statement, saying Kaiser Aluminum is “deeply saddened and our thoughts are with the family, in addition to the welfare of all of our employees.” The company also said it was

arranging counseling services to be provided to the staff.

Workers spoke out on social media about the conditions in the Kaiser factory. One former worker commented about the Kalamazoo plant, “At the age of 50 they had a woman rolling that hot aluminum! It could’ve been me! That place is a death trap!” Another worker said, “Avoid this plant at all costs.”

The death of Andrew Block brought the number of workers killed in Michigan in 2026 to 31. Since August 18, there have been two more workplace deaths in the state. The US Department of Labor reported more than 5,000 workplace fatalities in the US in 2024.

Andrew’s death comes more than a year after the death of Ronald Adams Sr. at Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex in Dundee, Michigan on April 7, 2025. Adams was crushed by an overhead gantry crane while performing maintenance. More than 16 months have passed, and MIOSHA has not provided any information to the Adams family or coworkers about its investigation.

When contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) in July, a MIOSHA spokesperson said that the Adams case “remains open,” shielding the auto company from any wrongdoing and leaving the family and fellow employees without closure.

Other recent, high profile workplace deaths include:

- **August 1:** Stellantis worker James Brasher. He was discarding decommissioned office furniture and equipment through a roll-up door on the second floor of a building in Center Line, Michigan when he fell to his death 25 feet into a trash dumpster below.

- **August 13:** Steelworker Jonathan Stepp. He was killed while operating a pot hauler at the Cleveland-Cliffs Burns Harbor Works in northwest Indiana. This was a little more than a month after a US Steel electrician Mitcheal Nelson was electrocuted while shutting off a malfunctioning transformer.

- **August 18:** Industrial laundry workers Heladio G. Perez and Mary Allen. They died after an explosion at their facility in Toledo, Ohio.

- **August 24:** Airport ramp worker Oscar Robayo. He was struck by a reversing passenger jet at Montréal-Trudeau International Airport.

The same basic issues are repeated over and again. Workers enter production areas without adequate equipment and procedures to protect their health or

lives. Production pressures, understaffing and inadequate safety systems create conditions in which a failure leads to a fatality.

For the capitalist owners, every workplace death is a cost-benefit calculation made by management. A worker’s life is worth less than lost production time, the cost of maintenance and the cost of staffing.

The unions are instruments of corporate management and share the company’s legal and financial interest in burying the truth. This is because the position and privileges of the union bureaucracy depend on suppressing the class struggle and ensuring that the interests of workers are suppressed. The silence of USW 2-1011 expresses this basic hostility to the workers the bureaucracy claims to represent.

Kaiser workers must demand answers. As workers already have done in the auto industry and at USPS following workplace deaths, they should conduct an independent rank-and-file investigation of Andrew Block’s death.

This will become the starting point for developing the fight for workers control over safety on the shop floor.



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