Stellantis declares it can search and impound workers' leased vehicles in expansion of police state crackdown

Shannon Jones
20 November 2026

Fill out the form after this article for information on building a rank-and-file committee in your plant.

Stellantis management, with the complicity of the United Auto Workers (UAW), is stepping up intrusive searches in and around the plants, including extending them to workers' Stellantis-leased vehicles in factory parking lots. The company says it will seek to impound lease vehicles if "contraband" items, including but not limited to alcohol and "illegal prescription drugs," are "discovered during a vehicle search or observed inside the vehicle, or if the operator is suspected of being impaired."

According to a notice posted by the UAW Local 1700 Education Committee at Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly in suburban Detroit, the policy began November 9. It states that if the listed circumstances exist, "site security will request that the employee voluntarily surrender all key fobs and keys associated with the vehicle." The policy covers all "Employee Lease, Product Evaluation, Pool, Field and other company-owned vehicles." It states that plant security cannot take key fobs by force but warns that police may be notified if a worker attempts to leave the property while believed to be under the influence.

This operation is a further step in the construction of a police-state apparatus inside the plants. It goes hand in hand with the union bureaucracy's suppression of workers' resistance to layoffs, unsafe working conditions, forced overtime and firings under a UAW-sanctioned absentee policy.

In September 2025, Stellantis began deploying gun-sniffing dogs inside Sterling Heights Assembly. The surveillance program has been expanded to other factories, including the Detroit Assembly Complex-Jefferson plant. Ford has also deployed police and K-9 units inside its plants to allegedly search for drugs, firearms and other prohibited items. Workers at the Ford Dearborn Truck plant have been subject to searches of personal belongings, with multiple suspensions and terminations of those who refuse to submit. UAW officials have warned Stellantis workers that refusal to cooperate with a management search could be treated as a policy violation and lead to discipline or termination.

Tim, a Detroit-area Stellantis worker, posted on Facebook about the use of firearm-sniffing dogs: "They have fired three workers at my facility recently. Gonna be hard to get them back. The security and dogs are sweeping lots and parking areas, when the dogs get a 'hit' you are summoned to your vehicle. Refuse to allow a search, you are fired, allow a search and they find something...fired. They're not playing."

The framework for management asserting the right to search and impound employee lease vehicles was established in the 2023 contract, hailed by UAW President Shawn Fain as a "historic" victory. The 2023 memorandum of understanding (MOU) that set up the Stellantis lease program, signed by the UAW, defines it as a "Company vehicle evaluation lease program" rather than a standard retail consumer lease. Management is thus given broader control over the vehicle than, say, a private auto dealer would have. Because the leased vehicle is considered a company benefit, and therefore tied to a worker's employment status, loss of employment means a worker simultaneously loses his or her car. Further, the MOU explicitly gives management the right to unilaterally revoke or alter the terms of the "benefit" at any time.

Workers at Stellantis plants are increasingly concerned about the heightened security measures, including the presence of security guards patrolling parking lots, searches of vehicles and the use of dogs. It has been widely rumored that Stellantis also has the ability to remotely unlock employee-leased vehicles. These measures have created an atmosphere of intimidation and uncertainty.

The policy is being presented by Stellantis and the UAW as a measure to protect workers' safety. But neither management or the union apparatus showed any concern for workers when wildfire smoke engulfed auto factories last

© World Socialist Web Site

summer, creating hazardous air quality, sickening workers and sending some to the hospital. Four autoworkers have been killed inside the plants since the signing of the 2023 sellout contract, including three Stellantis workers: Antonio Gaston, Ronald Adams Sr. and James Brasher.

In reality, the searches are part of expanding efforts to create a police-state atmosphere inside auto factories under conditions of growing anger over the erosion of safety and working conditions, all with the complicity of the UAW bureaucracy.

A Stellantis Jefferson worker described security personnel patrolling parking areas during lunch periods and approaching workers sitting in their cars. He said workers have reportedly been walked out of the plant following incidents involving security personnel and vehicle searches.

"From my perspective, they want to keep the wording as vague as possible so they can put what they want under the umbrella. They can say, 'This is other contraband.'"

He added, "What does 'reasonably suspect' mean?" As for "illegal prescription" medication, he said, "What about HIPAA privacy rights? Security guards are not supposed to have your personal medical information."

The intrusive searches raise another question: What if security guards come across copies of the *World Socialist Web Site* Autoworker Newsletter or other "objectionable" political material in a workers' car?

This recalls Ford's infamous Sociological Department, which monitored employees' personal lives, including visiting their homes to check for socialist literature on their bookshelves, enforce appropriate "moral" standards and root out radical workers.

"Once you're in that parking lot, you're on company property, and basically you're at the mercy of the company," the worker noted. "There are security guards patrolling the parking lot during lunch, trying to find something. I think a lot of people are getting walked out. At my plant, they're combining jobs and moving operations around to reduce the workforce. This feels like another tactic to get rid of people."

The physical environment of the plant itself contributes to the atmosphere. The worker described the fences, gates and other security measures as increasingly oppressive, comparing the plant to a prison.

"The way the plant is set up, with barbed-wire fences, security gates and everything, it feels like you're walking into a jail. You wonder when they're going to put in metal detectors."

The worker also raised concerns about the company's vehicle-lease program, which ties employees' transportation to their employment. Although the program may offer financial advantages, he chose not to participate. "I don't want my method of transportation being tied to the company."

The worker said the increasingly intrusive security measures reflect a growing imbalance of power between the company and its workforce, in which workers are subject to surveillance, searches and restrictions while having little ability to challenge the policies being imposed upon them. As he put it, the measures are ultimately "a method of control and power."

The increased monitoring and Stellantis management's threat to impound employee vehicles come as rank-and-file anger and militancy are growing, as shown by a series of contract rejection votes by auto parts workers this year and the virtual boycott by workers of the recent UAW national officers election. Fain won re-election with the votes of just 6 percent of the membership.

The heightened monitoring of workers goes hand in hand with discussions of converting auto plants to military production amid the expanding global wars being prosecuted by the US government. The war drive has the full support of Fain, who constantly invokes the World War II propaganda slogan of building the "Arsenal of Democracy." It also goes hand in hand with the UAW's support of Trump's tariffs and the scapegoating of Mexican workers.

Workers' basic democratic rights to freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, as well as freedom of speech and the right to organize, are under attack. To secure their rights, workers must organize independently of the UAW apparatus through the building of rank-and-file committees as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

Workers should demand:

- An end to all searches and surveillance.
- No police, no dogs, no undercover agents.
- Defense of workers' right to privacy and free speech.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site