

Toledo Fiat Chrysler workers launch rank-and-file safety committee to save lives amid COVID-19 rampage

By the Toledo Assembly Rank-and-File Safety Committee
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Autoworkers at the Fiat Chrysler Toledo Assembly Complex in northwest Ohio have organized a rank-and-file safety committee in solidarity with workers at FCA Jefferson North and Sterling Heights Assembly in the Detroit area. The committee issued the following statement on the exploding number of cases at the FCA Toledo plant that employs 6,500 workers building the Jeep Wrangler and Jeep Gladiator.

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter will assist autoworkers and other workers in establishing safety committees. Email the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter at autoworkers@wsws.org.

Cases of COVID-19 are spreading in the factory and there is an upsurge of cases in Lucas County and throughout Ohio. In Ohio, 1,525 COVID cases were reported Friday, the highest daily total yet, bringing the total cases to date to 62,856. There were 26 deaths, bringing the total statewide to just over 3,000. Our lives and the lives of our loved ones are in danger!

The advice of health experts for testing and social distancing is being ignored at all levels of government and corporate management in the chase after profits.

We are starting this committee because it is obvious that FCA and the UAW are working together. They have been for years. We see rampant and widespread corruption.

At the Jeep plant, workers are being thrown to the wolves. There is the blatant abuse of people taking place.

Workers are being forced to quit or retire to protect their health. Those who try to resist unsafe conditions face termination.

The UAW and FCA forced us back to work in the pandemic knowing it was too early. They are acting for

financial reasons, not the interests of workers. Information is being withheld and we are being lied to about the dangers from COVID.

We have excessive heat, lack of sanitation, no cooling. There are 1600-1700 temporary workers at the plant who are being forced to work with no time off or any rights what-so-ever.

The only way anything is going to happen is if we, the workers, step up and make it happen!

This committee raises the following demands:

1. Workers must be immediately notified of any cases of COVID-19 and what areas were affected. This information cannot be kept secret from workers.

2. When there's a case confirmed, the factory should be closed for at least 24 hours for deep cleaning, not just the affected area, but the whole plant. Preventative maintenance is needed to ensure a safe and comfortable working environment.

3. Social distancing must be implemented when entering and leaving the plant and during bathroom, lunch and other break times. Disinfectant and cleaning equipment will remain readily available for workers to use as they see fit.

4. All equipment will be cleaned on every break by a separate cleaning

crew, who will have cleaning equipment, follow social distancing guidelines, wear masks and who will be compensated for their labor by the company. FCA employees are not responsible for cleaning equipment, nor for paying the cleaning

crew.

5. The line must be stopped for 10 minutes every hour to enable workers to take off their masks, rest and cool off. If a worker has underlying health issues, which prevent them from being able to wear a mask in the plant, they should be able to either wear a face shield, or be guaranteed a job back after the pandemic, with full pay in the meantime.

6. Workers must have regular, universal testing. Temperature checks and self-reporting symptoms are not enough.

7. If conditions are not safe, workers have the right to refuse to work without threat of retaliation by management and the union.

8. Workers will not be targeted, reprimanded, terminated or otherwise harassed for taking time off to wait for test results. Reinstate any terminated employees immediately who have been fired for taking days off to get tested. No retribution for using FMLA to deal with family health and mental health issues.

9. The misuse and abuse of the temporary supplemental workers has to stop. The blatant violation of our work hours and schedules has to stop. They are working the same hours and they should have the same benefits.

We support the courageous stand of the Jefferson North and Sterling Heights assembly workers who halted production and set up rank-and-file safety committees to defend their lives. We call on workers at all auto plants and parts plants and workers in the US and everywhere to join this fight. COVID is spreading rapidly everywhere. We have a right to decent and safe conditions. The money must be made available to ensure health and safety from the multi-billion-dollar profits of corporate America.

The pandemic is getting worse every day. How many tens and hundreds of thousands more must die? Join our fight and share this statement. We encourage workers everywhere to build rank-and-file safety committees. Form a rank-and-file safety committee at your plant and connect with ours.

Safety must be the top priority, not just in words. Take up the fight!

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>