FOR A RANK-AND-FILE INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF FORD WORKER GREGORY KNOPF!



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

On Monday, March 16, Gregory Knopf, a 64-year-old worker at Ford's Sharonville Transmission Plant in Ohio, was killed when a press machine undergoing routine maintenance inadvertently switched on and pinned him. He was freed by first responders and rushed to Bethesda North Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. His son Corey described him as the best man he knew — a devoted father to three children, grandfather to eight grandchildren, a man who genuinely cared for everyone he met. Now he is gone, killed on a shop floor where he should have been safe.

The details emerging from Sharonville are painfully familiar. A machine that should not have been able to activate during maintenance did so anyway. A worker performing a routine task is dead. The Hamilton County Coroner's Office, OSHA, and Ford's administrative staff have opened investigations. Ford has stated that "safety is our highest priority."

We have heard all of this before.

Almost exactly eleven months ago, on March 7, 2025, 63-year-old Ronald Adams Sr. was killed at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Plant in Monroe County, Michigan. He too was killed by machinery that should not have been running. An overhead gantry crushed him while he serviced equipment. An independent investigation conducted by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees found evidence of routine bypassing of lockout/tagout procedures and a production schedule being driven at breakneck speed.

Stellantis issued its condolences. MIOSHA opened an investigation. The UAW said nothing. Nearly a year later, his widow Shamenia Stewart-Adams has received no findings, no answers, and no accountability. The plant is back in full production. Stellantis faces an $11,292 fine for safety violations connected to another worker death — Antonio Gaston, crushed at a Toledo assembly plant — a fine that is a rounding error for a corporation worth tens of billions.

These deaths are the predictable, preventable product of a system that treats workers as expendable inputs to production. The US Department of Labor reported 5,070 workers killed on the job in 2024, a figure that dramatically undercounts the real toll once occupational illness is included. The AFL-CIO estimates that 135,000 workers died from occupational disease in 2023 alone.

At the same time, the Trump administration is proposing an 8 percent cut to OSHA's budget, a 12.3 percent staffing reduction, and an estimated 30 percent drop in inspections. OSHA would conduct roughly 25,000 inspections, less than half the Reagan-era average. The message from Washington to workers is unmistakable: Your lives do not matter.

And where is the UAW? In the eleven months since Ronald Adams Sr. was killed, Shawn Fain's apparatus has issued no statement demanding accountability from Stellantis, made no public demands of MIOSHA, and moved as quickly as possible to restore production at Dundee Engine. The apparatus functions and has functioned for decades as a partner of management. The UAW bureaucracy's

silence over the death of Ronald Adams Sr. tells workers everything they need to know about what to expect following the death of Gregory Knopf.

We cannot defend our lives while we are bound hand and foot by a union apparatus that stands against us at every turn. As I have said before and will continue to say: the UAW as presently constituted is a union in name only. It functions to isolate us, discipline us, and protect the interests of a privileged bureaucracy that is in bed with the companies and the government.

The only force that can change this is the organized power of workers themselves. My campaign calls for the establishment of rank-and-file safety committees — democratically controlled by workers, independent of management and the union apparatus — with real authority to halt unsafe operations, demand proper lockout/tagout enforcement, conduct independent investigations, and preserve evidence before it can be altered or removed. Workers must control safety, not the companies and not the bureaucrats who have made their peace with them.

I extend my deepest condolences to the family of Gregory Knopf. His death demands answers, and his family deserves them.

If you work at the Sharonville Transmission Plant or anywhere in the Ford network and have information about the conditions that led to Gregory Knopf's death, I urge you to contact my campaign. If you have information about unsafe conditions or the deaths of any other worker killed on the job, reach out. Workers cannot forgive and forget what is being done to our brothers and sisters. We will not let these deaths be forgotten.

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