

Opposition to job cuts mounts as Ford announces months-long shutdown of EV truck plant in Rouge complex

Tim Rivers
31 October 2024

Join the fight against layoffs! Join the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network by filling out the form below.

Rank-and-file autoworkers reacted with anger and disgust to Ford's announcement that it was shutting down production at its electric vehicle truck plant in Dearborn, Michigan, for at least two months. According to the *Automotive News*, Ford plans to stop building its F-150 Lightning from mid-November through the end of the year.

The seven-week shutdown will begin at the end of the day November 15, with production resuming January 6, the industry publication reported. But Ford already cut 1,400 jobs, or two-thirds of the workforce, at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center (REV-C) in March, dropping the facility to just one shift. Now, it is not certain when or if the remaining 750 workers will be brought back.

"They laid off two shifts back in March," a Rouge worker told the WSW. "Now they're closing the plant. They say it's going to open back up in January, but there is no guarantee."

When it opened three years ago powered by the most up-to-date robotics and computer-driven technology, corporate and United Auto Workers officials said the REV-C plant would provide an expanding workforce with top pay and benefits for decades to come.

The idling of the plant is part of a jobs massacre by the global automakers, including this week's announcement that VW will shut as many as three plants in Germany, slash thousands of jobs and impose an across-the-board pay cut of as much as 20 percent. In the US, Stellantis, GM and Ford have carried out thousands of job cuts after the imposition of the UAW's sellout contracts in 2023.

Throughout the world, the global car companies are seeking to shift the cost of the slower than expected transition to electric vehicles onto the backs of the working class.

During the first months of the new Lightning model in May 2021, Ford automaker said it would have to double production to meet customer demand; and at one point, the company stopped taking reservations to cope with the overwhelming response. Earlier this year, however, the company said it was cutting its production targets for the EV pickup by half.

"When these electric trucks first came out, they couldn't keep enough of them around, even at \$75,000 and up," the Ford Rouge worker continued. "Now these big corporations, Volkswagen, Stellantis and Ford are shutting down because they overproduced."

The UAW bureaucracy pushed through its sellout contracts with the Big Three following last fall's phony "stand up" strike based on the claims that the deals contained unparalleled job protections. As the WSW warned at the time, UAW President Shawn Fain was working with the Biden-Harris administration to pave the way for the massive job cuts that would result from the transition to EVs, which analysts say require 40 percent less labor to produce.

But US and European automakers cannot keep up with Chinese car companies, which dominate the EV battery market and supply chains and can produce the vehicles far more efficiently and cheaply. The US and European governments have responded with massive tariffs against Chinese vehicles, even as automakers reduce capacity and slash tens of thousands of jobs in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, the US and China itself.

Responding to the International Workers Rank-and-File Committee's (IWA-RFC) call "For a global rank-and-file campaign against job cuts in the auto industry," the Ford worker told the WWSWS, "I agree that everything is global now. We are using global symbols and international operational systems. Production is global. Engineering is global.

"You have to organize a worldwide movement of the workers to get control of the resources and the money that is now in the hands of the billionaires and distribute all of it equally. That way we can put an end to inequality and put an end to these wars which are erupting everywhere.

"When Obama came in back in '08, the economy was so bad that all the major industries took away the pensions, and people were forced to work as temps for four and five years at half pay and no benefits.

"Now, they are trying to get Trump in again to overthrow what's left of this democracy. He's a convicted criminal, who should be in prison right now. You know they are not going to give it up without a fight. They want an autocracy where the billionaires rule through the heavy hand of a dictator."

In a statement issued Thursday night, Socialist Equality Party vice presidential candidate Jerry White denounced the job cuts and the complicity of the UAW bureaucracy.

The shutdown of the REV-C facility at the Ford Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan for at least two months is part of the ongoing jobs massacre by the global automakers. This includes VW's announcement earlier this week that it is closing three plants, cutting tens of thousands of jobs and imposing massive pay cuts on the remaining workers.

This is the brutal face of capitalism, a system of labor exploitation, which is fully backed by Harris and Trump. Corporations extract billions in profits from workers and the toss them out like used machinery.

Opposition from rank-and-file workers is growing, including the vote by GM workers at Ft. Wayne, Indiana assembly plant who angered over the firing of 250 temporary workers and other job cuts.

Alliance But ~~this~~ struggle cannot be left in the hands of the UAW bureaucracy, which functions as a tool of corporate management and the warmongering Biden-Harris administration. That is why I support the call of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees to launch a global counter-offensive to defend jobs.

On its third-quarter earnings call with analysts Monday, Ford President and CEO Jim Farley said there is a global price war with EVs, "fueled by overcapacity, a flood of new EV nameplates and massive compliance pressure."

Ford Model e (the automaker's electric vehicle business) reported a loss before interest and taxes of \$1.2 billion in the third quarter, continuing a trend of Ford losing money on EVs.

Farley said Ford expects about 150 new EV nameplates to hit the North American market by the end of 2026. In response, he said the company was focusing on costs by shifting launches, trimming capacity of batteries and accelerating the mix of its batteries so that it can take advantage of tax credits available by producing lithium iron phosphate batteries at the battery factory it is building outside Marshall, Michigan.



To contact the WWSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact