

Bridgestone America and Nissan announce plans for major layoffs, thousands slated to lose their jobs

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Bridgestone Americas announced it will be closing its LaVergne, Tennessee tire manufacturing plant later this year and lay off 700 employees from the Nashville area factory. According to a January 23 corporate announcement, the job cuts are part of a “strategic initiative to optimize its business footprint, strengthen its competitiveness, and enhance the quality of the company’s U.S. operations.”

The 2.2 million square foot factory, which was opened by Akron, Ohio-based Firestone in 1972, will cease production on July 31. The factory has long been operated by Bridgestone Corporation of Japan, which acquired Firestone in 1988, making it one of the largest tire manufacturers in the world.

The plant closure is part of a global job cutting campaign, including the corporate and sales divisions at the Nashville headquarters and reductions in Argentina and Brazil. Roughly 1,760—or nearly four percent—of “our nearly 44,000 teammates across North America and Latin America,” the company said in a statement, “are leaving the company as part of the voluntary and involuntary workforce reductions.”

Earlier this month, the United Steelworkers Local 310L reported Bridgestone had informed union officials it would make “voluntary separation offers” to 130 employees at its Des Moines, Iowa agricultural tire plant. The factory, which once employed 1,800 workers, was down to 875 employees before the new cutbacks.

The LaVerne plant is one of two Bridgestone TBR (Truck, Bus, and Radial) plants. Production of tires for cars and light trucks at the LaVergne plant ended in 2009, leading to the layoff of half the workforce. Production is reportedly being shifted to its TBR plant

in Warren County, Tennessee.

Although United Steelworkers officials claim the contract gives laid off workers “preferential hiring rights” at company plants in Des Moines, Akron and Russellville, Arkansas, management has not promised any transfers. “With respect to long-term finished tire production, it will be assumed by existing Bridgestone Americas plants. No jobs are being transferred to or added at other locations,” management declared.

In 2022, the USW bureaucracy blocked a strike by 4,000 workers at six Bridgestone plants, including LaVergne, and pushed through a contract, which the union and management officials claimed would protect their jobs.

LaVergne and the surrounding Rutherford County will be greatly impacted by the sudden closure. The city of LaVergne boasts a population of less than 40,000. A loss of 700 jobs means unemployment for almost 2% of the population.

Bridgestone workers responded angrily in the days leading up to job cut announcement, with several posting comments on the web site thelayoff.com.

“La Vergne got the axe. Who’s next?” one asked. Another pointed to “layoffs being done all week” and speculated on what attacks were coming next, including potential pay cuts.

Another pointed to white-collar layoffs, two weeks ago, saying, “Salary people being let go now. When do they come for the rest of us?” Another commented on the callous nature of job cut announcements, “Of course Bridgestone is doing this virtually. Not even the respect to do it in person.”

Another said, “Welcome to the ‘new’ Bridgestone. They don’t care about you and never have.” A worker

replied, “Capitalists don't care about you, they care about profits.”

According to an article in the *Tennessean* published January 23, “This is Tennessee's third major layoff of the year thus far, following 65 cuts at Dollar General's corporate headquarters in Goodlettsville two weeks ago and Perdue Farms announcing the closure of its Monterey facility this week. Nissan also announced 9,000 global layoffs in November but has not yet said how many Tennessee workers will lose jobs.”

Last week, Nissan announced it was initiating “voluntary buyouts” to reduce its US workforce by the end of the year. Nissan is cutting shifts at several plants, including a vehicle assembly plant in Smyrna, Tennessee; a powertrain and engine plant in Decherd, Tennessee; and a vehicle assembly plant in Canton, Mississippi.

Nissan will also be cutting jobs in its home market in Japan, halting production of its AD model commercial vehicles later this year and potentially affecting hundreds.

These job cuts are part of the company's bid to reduce global production capacity by 20 percent and reduce spending up to \$2.6 billion by the end of the year. Further job cuts are expected in 2026 as Nissan plans to execute a merger with Honda.

The layoffs at Nissan and Bridgestone are part of a wider effort by transnational automakers to reduce costs as they struggle to control markets, supply chains and profits, particularly in the emerging electric vehicles (EV) market. Confronting lower costing and more efficient Chinese automakers, the global corporations are carrying out a jobs bloodbath.

In the United States, Stellantis has cuts shifts and slashed the jobs of thousands of workers in metro Detroit, Toledo, Ohio and Kokomo, Indiana, as part of global job cuts including Italy, France and the UK. General Motors has slashed jobs at assembly plants in Orion, Michigan and Fairfax, Kansas and continues to pink slip salaried workers at the GM Tech Center in Warren, Michigan. Ford eliminated an entire shift at Ford's Rouge Electric Vehicle Center, resulting in 1,400 job cuts, and Ford recently announced plans to cut 2,900 more jobs in Germany and 800 in the UK.

In opposition to the nationalist program of the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers bureaucracies

and their support for Trump's America First trade war measures, rank-and-file workers need an international strategy to defend their jobs and living standards.

Bridgestone and Nissan are transnational giants, and their activity is not constrained by national borders. Slashing jobs and cutting shifts are strategies that originate from their singular need to maximize profit. A struggle confined to a single plant is doomed to fail, as these companies will simply shift production to other regions to exploit cheaper labor and more favorable conditions. The working class must unite with their brothers and sisters in other plants in other cities and across borders, building of rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade unions that are imposing the dictates of the capitalist system.

Job cuts must be opposed, and the right to a secure job and adequate pay must be defended. Doing so is possible only through the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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