

## **A moment of silence**

**By Loren Meyers, Plantwide Safety Chairman**

On Thursday, June 2, 2022 Steven Matthew Dierkes, 39, of Peoria, IL, passed away at 9:23 a.m. after falling into a molten iron crucible at the Caterpillar company's Mapleton, Illinois foundry. Steven was in his 6th day of furnace operator training performing temperature and thermal sampling, at a temperature of over 2,600 degrees. Steven is the second fatality at the Mapleton facility in the last 7 months, our hearts go out to Brother Dierke's family and loved ones as they struggle with the sudden loss.

Dennis D. Hilst, 67, of Manito passed away Sunday, May 22, 2022, at OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria. Dennis worked for Caterpillar Mapleton and was a Safety Representative for the UAW 974. He was also a volunteer fireman for Manito. According to a news release from the Pekin Police Department, a motorcycle was headed north on Veterans Drive while a passenger car was turning left onto the same road from Towerline Road. At around 12:24 p.m., the two vehicles collided. The motorcyclist, Dennis D. Hilst, age 67 of Manito, was airlifted to OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center where he was later pronounced deceased. He loved his family, grandkids, and dogs. He was loved by his family and many friends.

Caterpillar Mapleton foundry has also experienced a leg amputation and multiple finger incidents to UAW members in the last year.

We need to communicate clearly that our safety is important to us and not only when there is an incident. Your employer is responsible for your safety and health. You are responsible for following rules. If you get hurt and have violated a work rule, don't be surprised if you get disciplined, even if your boss knows the rules are not followed day

to day. Your supervisor may take responsibility for you not following the rule or he/she may throw you under the bus.

Thoroughly read each SJP and the Standard Work for the jobs you do, because you will be held accountable for every word in those documents. Ask for copies of anything you have to sign, because the document you sign might not match the one provided in the event of a grievance. Report all hazards, it's your contractual obligation. Do not use the CPS C/I cards to report hazards or tell the Team Lead, tell your boss-that's in the contract too. If you don't have the correct tooling, tell your boss. If you have to pound parts with large hammers, use pry bars or cheater bars, tell your boss that there must be a better way to do the job. If you're still using bar knobs, tell your boss. If your floor is uneven or slippery, tell your boss. If your PPE is worn out, does not fit correctly or is unsanitary, tell your boss. If you have to lift from below your knees or above your shoulders, tell your boss. If you have to climb and cannot maintain three points of contact, tell your boss. If you smell, taste or feel coolant mist, tell your boss. If you are provided a hoist, use it, if you can't, tell your boss. If your boss can't, won't or doesn't know how to address your concerns, ask for your UAW Health and Safety Representative.

Point out all hazards on your job to your supervisor, not a Team Leader. Write down the day and date as a reminder to you. Ask your supervisor for your UAW Safety Representative if you are not satisfied with every aspect of how the problem is addressed. Your UAW Rep is your advocate and the Safety Complaint Procedure outlined in 8.3 of the contract works.

Another issue UAW members need to be aware of that is not just plaguing our membership but the media and social network too is Misinformation and Disinformation.

<https://grassrootjournalist.org/2019/08/23/misinformation-has-created-a-new-world-disorder/>

- Misinformation is false, misleading, or out-of-context content shared without an intent to deceive.
- Disinformation is purposefully false or misleading content shared with an intent to deceive and cause harm.
- Be suspicious of information that elicits strong positive or negative emotions, contains extraordinary claims, speaks to your biases, or isn't properly sourced.
- Before sharing content, make sure the source is reliable, and check to see if multiple sources are reporting the same info.

A dubious news article that went out after the tragic death on June 2<sup>th</sup> 2022 at Mapleton gave a gruesome account that the victim was half in the meltier and half on the melt deck from a source named Ron. I don't know who Ron is but he should be ashamed of himself giving dishonest information that was untrue and the WSWS.ORG not vetting its sources. I felt sorry for the family members that had to read this garbage. The article wasn't completely incorrect about the history of the incidents or the retaliatory measures from the company for reporting accidents. But I was angered by the way it portrayed the UAW and the late Plant wide Safety Chairman who passed in 2018 Steve Mitchell of (Practically Doing Nothing). I was one of the 53 11C Complainants that Steve represented and he tirelessly put all of his time and effort in all these cases as he did mine. Steve Mitchell went to Washington D.C. and spoke in front of the senate committee to pass legislation to strengthen 11C whistle blower regulations. The senate committee that was a mixture of liberal and conservative members voted unanimously to pass the bill through to the legislature but stalled there. Why? legislation that has been passed through the years by conservatist lobbyist has weakened whistle blower laws to protect all workers. When you hear a politician giving

his election speech and his labor platform is to get rid of JOB KILLING REGULATIONS, he really means doing away with regulations that protect you from corporate GREED and liability. With the backing of the International, two other of my UAW 974 Safety colleagues:

Shawn Ragle, Mapleton Safety Chairman, went in front of the senate committee for Silica dust exposure affects on employees and what a company can do to reduce or eliminate the hazard.

Ross Baize, Mapleton Safety Representative and UAW international safety trainer, went in front of the Senate committee for 11C whistle blower complaint. He also was one of the 53.

In closing, your Union is working for you. Don't believe disinformation of social media, check your sources. One of the best ways to do that is get involved. The best information you will get is at our UAW monthly meetings. With contract coming up March 2023, we need to be together in solidarity, not divided. Managements best weapon is turning us against each other.

Lastly, speak well of your union because it is a reflection of you. Our union, like our country, can only be as good as the people who support it.