

Support Flex-N-Gate Workers

It has been reported that Flex-N-Gate's Urbana plant, Guardian West, has hideous health and safety conditions. At this plant, the employees use chemicals like hexavalent chromium for chrome plating of the bumpers they produce. Workers are sometimes knocked down or out by the bumpers on the line, splashed with painful acids and toxic chemicals they take home on their clothes. Workers are not given the proper safety equipment or information in a language they can understand. Many of the workers are Congolese French speakers or Spanish speakers from Latin America.

"The company has never told us what chemicals we are breathing and getting on our skin, or how they can make us sick."

According to OSHA, workers exposed to hexavalent chromium, a powerful lung carcinogen, can develop lung cancer and damage to the nose, throat and respiratory system. Inhaling the chemical's fumes can cause allergic reactions or asthmatic symptoms, such as wheezing and shortness of breath.

Flex-N-Gate Corporation employs over 12,450 people at 50 manufacturing and 9 product development and engineering facilities throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Spain. And takes in \$3 billion in revenue.

OSHA requires that workers must know the proper way to perform a task in order to minimize their exposure. Employers are required to provide appropriate protective clothing and equipment. The employer must not allow any worker to remove contaminated objects from the workplace. The Cr(VI) standards also include requirements for change rooms, washing facilities, and eating and drinking areas to minimize exposure.

The workers have called OSHA several times to report health and safety violations at the plant. As a result they have been facing reprisals by the employer.

The owner of Flex-N-Gate, Shahid Khan, is a major donor to the University of Illinois. Khan owns the Urbana Country Club, is Chairman of Flightstar aircraft management and charter, and now also owns Florida's Jacksonville Jaguars.

The local plant is not unionized.

If you would like to sign onto a letter in support of the employees, email Jobs With Justice (rbaldwin@seiu73.org or dlj725@hughes.net).

The Guardian West plant in Urbana is 138,000 sq. ft. They do metal stamping, mechanical assemblies, and chrome and nickel plating.