

JOBS

Back to work at Daimler

After a three-and-a-half week shutdown, Daimler Trucks North America reopened its Swan Island Western Star truck plant April 20 with lots of measures in place to prevent COVID-19 virus.

To create a less crowded assembly line, the plant is now operating two shifts—a 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. day shift and a 3:30 p.m. to midnight swing shift. As workers enter the

plant, they're scanned to see if they have elevated temperature, and any who show symptoms are sent home. Workers are required to wear face masks, either paper masks distributed by the company or their own home-brought versions.

During the shutdown, work stations were reorganized: Processes that formerly required two people have been rearrange to keep just one worker at each work station. Bathrooms, wash stations and break rooms are taped to keep people apart. Near the time clock and plant gate, markings show what six feet of distance is like. Managers, assigned as social distancing monitors, wander through the plant,

reminding workers to keep a safe distance apart, and make daily reports to higher-ups. Because communicating at six feet distance is challenging in a noisy manufacturing setting,

Daimler offered radio headsets to workers who need to communicate for training.

Despite all those measures, many workers were still apprehensive about returning to

work during a pandemic.

"The responses were all over the map, from, 'I shouldn't have to be here,' to 'Thank God I have a job,'" Machinists union rep Dwain Panian told the Labor Press.

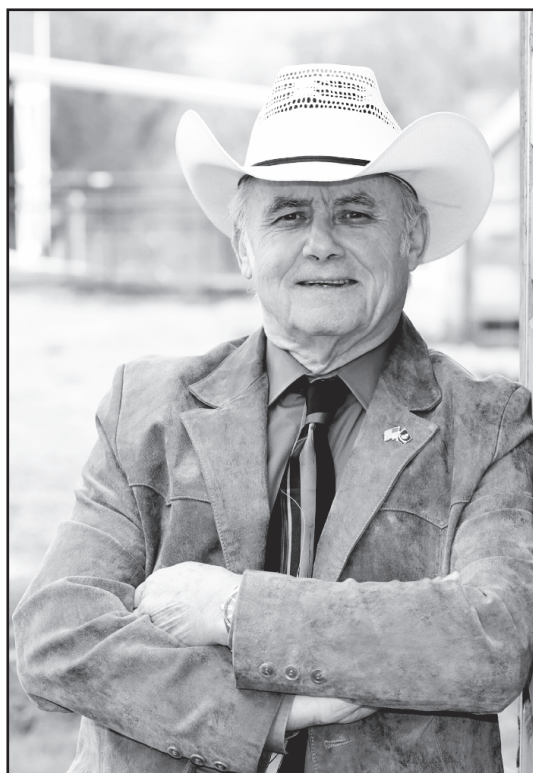
"It was a challenging week," Panian said. "We had a lot of bumps along the road."

The production line is moving a little under half its normal speed, but the hope is with two shifts to meet close to normal production targets.

But a week after reopening, hiccups elsewhere in the supply chain temporarily closed the plant again April 28; it was set to reopen again May 4.

"The responses were all over the map, from, 'I shouldn't have to be here,' to, 'Thank God I have a job.'"

— Dwain Panian, Machinists W24 rep



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