



# PREVENTABLE DEATHS



COSH

# 2016

# Executive Summary

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (COSH) is one of the leading organizations advocating for the right of workers to go home safe to their families every day. This work is critical, as each year thousands of workers are killed and millions more suffer work-related injuries and illnesses.

**Preventable Deaths 2016** outlines key trends from the most recent available data, including:

- ▶ **More workers died** in calendar year 2014 than in 2013.
- ▶ **There were 4,821 deaths** on the job from traumatic events in 2014, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is the most recent year for which data are available.
- ▶ **Fatalities increased in 2014** in the agriculture, construction, mining and manufacturing sectors. There were also more on-the-job deaths among older workers and temporary and contract workers.
- ▶ **Significant causes of death—such as slips, trips and falls are preventable**, by following documented and entirely effective safety protocols. OSHA's fall protection rule, for example, is first on the list of safety standards most frequently violated by U.S. employers.
- ▶ **More than 95,000 U.S. workers died from long-term occupational diseases** in 2008, according to a recent estimate by leading scholars and practitioners. The figure is higher than previous estimates.

▶ **Cancer claims more lives than any other occupational disease** in most countries. The disease can be prevented, writes safety engineer Jukka Takala, president of the International Commission on Occupational Health, "by reducing or eliminating the exposures leading to the disease."

**This year, for the first time, National COSH also recognizes Outstanding Health and Safety Stories, in print, online, broadcast and on film.** The selected stories, based on an extensive review of media about occupational safety published and produced during the past year, feature in-depth investigations of critical health and safety issues.

The selected film is "[A Day's Work](#)," released in 2015 and produced by David M. Garcia and Dave DeSario.

The selected print, online and broadcast stories are:

- ▶ *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, "[Gasping for Action](#)," by Raquel Rutledge, Feb. 14, 2015, June 20, 2015, Oct. 20, 2015, Dec. 30, 2015
- ▶ *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, "[Tragic Harvest](#)," by Jeffrey Meitrodt, Oct. 4, 5, 6, 7, 2015
- ▶ *National Public Radio and ProPublica.org*, "[Inside Corporate America's Campaign to Ditch Workers' Comp](#)," by Howard Berkes and Michael Grabell, Oct. 14, 2015
- ▶ *Center for Public Integrity and Slate.com*, "[Common solvent keeps killing workers, consumers](#)," by Jamie Smith Hopkins, October 21, 2015

▶ [New York Times, "Safety Lapses and Deaths Amid a Building Boom in New York,"](#) by David W. Chen, Nov. 26, 2015

▶ [McClatchy Newspapers, "Irradiated: The hidden legacy of 70 years of atomic weaponry: At least 33,480 Americans dead,"](#) By Rob Hotakainen, Lindsay Wise, Frank Matt and Samantha Ehlinger, Dec. 11, 2015

*(Note: Print, online and broadcast stories are presented in order of date of publication. National COSH recognizes each of these stories equally as an extraordinary contribution to public understanding of workplace safety.)*

The analysis of trends in workplace deaths and the summaries of Outstanding Health and Safety Stories are both illustrated with specific examples

of workers who have become seriously ill or who have died as a result of workplace traumas or long-term diseases.

Workers featured in the trends analysis are drawn from the [U.S. Worker Fatality Database](#), a listing of fallen workers maintained by National COSH and the Workers Defense Project at [COSHNetwork.org](http://COSHNetwork.org).

Workers featured in the Outstanding Health and Safety Stories section are based on reporting by the journalists and filmmakers who authored and produced the winning stories.

The report concludes with a summary of advocacy, research and training efforts by local COSH groups, aimed at empowering workers and improving health and safety conditions in U.S. workplaces.