At all costs

Workers’ Memorial Day 2017

"At All Costs"

Photojournalist
Earl Dotter

Workers’ Memorial Week
Syracuse, New York
April - May, 2017
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At all costs -- for too many</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution to recognize Workers’ Memorial Day (Syracuse Common Council)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These workers died in the 26 counties in OHCC region between January, 2016 and March, 2017 -- and one had a very serious injury</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injured worker: “I just want my health back”</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face it: We are all sickened by inequality at work</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work takes a toll in many ways, wherever we work</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related suicides: When work is so bad that you kill yourself</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why white working class Americans are dying “deaths of despair”</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lesson in preventing occupational disease:</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/drink/e-cig flavorings -- nice smells, but they kill workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s policies are already making workplaces more toxic</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is to be done? Protecting workers’ lives and limbs: An agenda for action</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for health and safety and workers’ rights</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your rights to a healthy and safe job in New York State?</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements from our supporters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers’ Memorial Week 2017 and related events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We just come to work here. We don’t come to die</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workers’ Memorial Day -- every day

At all costs -- for too many

This booklet is dedicated to 42 individuals who died in 2016 and early 2017 just because they went to work or had a job, and one very seriously injured man who almost died. They were residents of, or were killed in, the 26 counties in central and northern New York served by the Occupational Health Clinical Centers (OHCC). The names of another 16 remain anonymous for various reasons. They all are among the 200-plus across New York State who are known to have met the same fate in 2016.

On top of this, work-related diseases kill many more people in this region and around the world. Based on national estimates, it’s likely that about 3,000 people in Upstate New York died of an occupational disease in 2016.

All these people are recognized on pages 6 to 17. For those where we have information, there is a brief description of what happened to each person, with the county where they were injured or died, the date and their age. There are photos for many of the 38 men, two women and two children.

This toll can be prevented. Employers are supposed to provide healthy and safe workplaces and jobs. Workers are to have rights. Government agencies are supposed to make and enforce laws and regulations to ensure both happen. When prevention fails, workers’ compensation is supposed to be a no-fault remedy; workers and their families are to get help, while employers don’t have to face legal suits from those workers.

Unfortunately, no part of the system works very well these days. Workers’ Memorial Day, and the Week around it, is a time to draw attention to what is not working. It’s also the time to talk about what we need to change. We hope this booklet contributes to both goals.

What’s Workers’ Memorial Day? Workers’ Memorial Week?

April 28 is an international day of remembrance for workers killed, injured, and/or made sick by work.

The idea came from Canadian trade unionists Ray Sentens and Colin Lambert. A former miner, Lambert lamented the contrast between the lack of memorials for his co-workers, and others who died due to their job, and the public events for fallen police officers and firefighters.

In 1984, he took the idea to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), where he worked. Two years later, the Canadian Labour Congress held the first Day of Mourning at its Toronto convention.

April 28th coincides with the passage of Canada’s first workers’ compensation law, in 1914.

The canary is an allusion to the famous “canary in a coal mine.” Workers would carry caged birds with them into mine tunnels. If dangerous gases were present, the canary would die, warning the men to get out of the mine immediately. The canary became the Memorial Day symbol became “it shows that today workers are the canaries --they are front-line protection for all of us,” Lambert said in 2010. Now the symbol appears on memorials, flags, banners,
and pins across Canada, where the day is recognized officially by all levels of government.

In the United States, the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) called for the first Workers’ Memorial Day in 1989. They also used April 28, the date on which the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) opened its doors in 1971.

Since then, it has been embraced by individual unions, the National COSH (Council for Occupational Safety and Health) Network and its members, workers’ centers, communities, and even OSHA.

The National COSH Network has encouraged us to expand activities to take place during a Workers’ Memorial Week. This year, events will be held in more than 100 communities around the United States, involving an array of groups. Some produce reports. Others take to the streets with rallies, protests, and funeral-like marches. Still others get municipal resolutions or proclamations as we did from the Onondaga County Council and Syracuse Common Council (the latter’s is on page 4).

The idea of a day to recognize dead, dying and injured workers has gone around the globe. The Hazards magazine in the UK shares posters and information about activities from places such as England, Spain, Italy, Tasmania, Korea, Argentina, and the Philippines (see www.28april.org). As they say, we recognize Workers’ Memorial Day because worldwide, work kills more than war each year.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) estimated last year that one worker dies every 15 seconds in the world, due to employer negligence -- two million people in a year.

This year, our theme is: Unsafe and unfair – discrimination on the job hurts us all. The Hazards magazine piece on pages 19 - 24 of this booklet looks at the different kinds of discrimination and inequalities that affect job health and safety.

Throughout the world, workers and their advocates also continue to use the famous words of union organizer Mother Jones: Mourn for the dead. Fight like hell for the living.

Central New York Workers’ Memorial Week

We put out this booklet during Workers’ Memorial Week to:

- honor those killed, hurt and made sick by work
- make job hazards more visible,
- put prevention on the table, and
- encourage action to stop the carnage.

For this year’s Workers’ Memorial Week, we want to:

- remember the many people who are often invisible in a society that pays little attention to the work-related hazards causing injuries, illnesses, and diseases;
At all costs: Work...
Resolution - to recognize Workers’ Memorial Day, on April 28, 2017

WHEREAS, on April 28th, 2017, AFL-CIO unions observe Workers’ Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job and to renew the fight for work that is safe, healthy and pays fair wages; and

WHEREAS, as promised by both the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Mine Safety and Health Act, workers have a right to a safe work environment and the unions have worked diligently to ensure this, winning protections that have made jobs safer, saving thousands of lives and preventing millions of workplace injuries and illnesses; and

WHEREAS, some employers have cut corners and violated the law, putting their employees in serious danger, with some businesses executing an all-out assault on working people, seeking to roll back existing protections and block new safeguards; and

WHEREAS, after decades of struggling to improve working conditions and to make job safety the highest priority, it is the goal of the AFL-CIO to celebrate the victories won by the workers while continuing to fight for improved job safety and the freedom to form unions without the threat of worker retaliation; and

WHEREAS, this day is a golden opportunity to highlight the preventable nature of many workplace incidents, while also promoting campaigns and union organization in the fight for safer work environments; and,

WHEREAS, on Workers’ Memorial Day, April 28, 2017, befitting of the day’s slogan, “Remember the dead—Fight for the living,” unions have been asked to observe a moment of silence at 1:00 p.m. EST and 10 a.m. PST on behalf of those individual workers who have paid the ultimate price; and

WHEREAS, April 28th also sees a United Nations effort in celebration of World Day for Safety and Health at Work, in support of global efforts to improve labor standards; and

WHEREAS, it is important to celebrate the role of unions in our lives and the contributions made by dedicated individuals, not only for fellow union members, but in helping to preserve the rights of all working men and women around the world; and

WHEREAS, the City of Syracuse joins with the Occupational Health Clinical Centers, 1199 SEIU, CNY Area Labor Federation (AFL-CIO), Greater Syracuse Council of Occupational Safety and Health, Greater Syracuse Labor Council (AFL-CIO), the Workers Center of Central New York and all our citizens in a collective display of support for healthy and safe jobs and for the prevention of work related hazards;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Syracuse Common Council, as duly elected representatives of the proud citizens of the City of Syracuse, do hereby recognize April 28, 2017, to be Workers’ Memorial Day to be observed not only in the City of Syracuse, but around the world.

Adopted: by a unanimous vote of the Syracuse Common Council

Introduced at the regular meeting of the Syracuse Common Council on Monday, April 24, 2017
These workers died in the 26 counties in OHCC region between January, 2016 and March, 2017 -- and one had a very serious injury

Across the United States, it’s estimated that more than 275 people died every day because of a job in 2015. Only 13 of them are traumatic injuries. Like 2014, that’s enough to wipe out the city of Syracuse in less than 1.5 years.

Although the numbers of deaths have gone down over the years, the picture is still grim. In 2015 (the latest year for national statistics), we know that at least 4,836 people died on the job in the US. Latino workers were particularly hard hit; their 903 deaths were the most since 2007. 745 heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers died, as transportation incidents had the most fatalities of any sector and more than 2014. Falls in construction continue to take a high toll. (See the map below.)

Employers in the private and public sectors reported almost 3.7 million injuries in 2015. (This leaves out farms with less than 11 employees.) Illnesses accounted for less than five percent of the approximately 2.9 million cases that private industry employers reported. 31 percent of the total for both sectors were musculoskeletal (strains and sprains).

The 2016 picture in Central and Northern New York has some parallels with that national picture. Driving -- especially tractor-trailers-- topped the regional list of killer jobs, along with logging and farming. This year, we can name 42 people who died in Central and Northern New York. We know there were another 16 whose information is still confidential, bringing the year’s total to 58. This year, our chart also includes one person who was very seriously injured, and almost died.

The chart also recognizes those who died from lingering occupational diseases and illnesses. Based on national figures of about 95,800, we estimated about 3,000 people died for those reasons in Upstate New York in 2016.

The real picture is much worse, especially for injuries, illnesses and diseases. Workers don’t report injuries or hazards, fearing job loss, other retaliation or the delays and denials of workers’ compensation. Doctors fail to diagnose job-related illnesses and diseases. Employers may try to avoid reporting injuries or illnesses, to keep their compensation premiums down; they certainly fight compensation claims regularly. And accurate reporting of

Anne Marie Gibson, of the state’s Department of Health, collected these names and stories. She is the principal investigator for the NYS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries program. We know there are more. Please help us keep track, and prevent them in the first place.

This map shows where construction workers have died by falls in New York State between 2011 and 2016. (David Ettere did the NY state basemap; CPWR provided the fatality data.)

At all costs: Workers’ Memorial Week, 2017
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>What do we know about what happened?</th>
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<tr>
<td>01/13/16</td>
<td>Gary J. Schultz</td>
<td>Schoharie</td>
<td>Gary was a dairy farmer on Abrams Road in Gallupville. He was using a payloader on a steep, icy slope of his farm. When he didn’t return, his relatives began searching for him. They found the payloader in the farm pond, where it had landed upside down in seven feet of water. It took hours for emergency responders to use equipment to remove the vehicle. Gary was still inside the cab. He was 54 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Gary J. Schultz" /></td>
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<td>1/21/16</td>
<td>Ted C. Amidon</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>Ted was standing between a parked vehicle and the Best Tile loading dock in Syracuse. The contractor was picking up materials for a job site. The parked vehicle’s driver tried to move it out of the way, not realizing it was in reverse. The vehicle lurched backwards, pinning Ted against the dock. He died in hospital from his injuries. Ted was 57 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Ted C. Amidon" /></td>
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<td>01/24/16</td>
<td>Paul Giessler (&quot;Mr. G.&quot;)</td>
<td>Herkimer</td>
<td>Paul owned Mr. G’s Soup Garden in Old Forge. When the chef didn’t return home from the restaurant, his wife asked the owner of a next-door business to check on him. Paul was found at the bottom of the basement stairs. He died as a result of his fall. Paul was 55 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Paul Giessler (&quot;Mr. G.&quot;)" /></td>
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<td>02/04/16</td>
<td>John H. Murphy</td>
<td>Otsego</td>
<td>John was a waste management worker at Stericycle’s Lower River Street plant in Oneonta. A yard truck hit the retired Army staff sergeant. The driver was backing up to off-load materials at the loading dock. John was pinned between the truck’s trailer and the loading dock. He died from severe trauma injuries at the scene. John was 69 years old.</td>
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<td>2/6/16</td>
<td>James L. Corter</td>
<td>Seneca</td>
<td>James worked as an operator at the Seneca Meadow landfill in Seneca Falls. As he worked on a tipper (a machine used to unload waste from trailers brought into the landfill), a tractor trailer driver was backing into the area. The tractor trailer hit James, who died at the scene. He was 55 years old.</td>
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<td>02/17/16</td>
<td>Travis Lambert</td>
<td>Herkimer</td>
<td>Travis was driving a tractor-trailer on Interstate 90 about 8:30 am. The Belleville, Ontario man's vehicle drifted and struck the center median guide rail. It overturned on the driver's side; the rail pushed through the cab windshield. Travis was pronounced dead at the scene as a result of blunt force injuries. He was 37 years old.</td>
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<td>2/17/16</td>
<td>John Robert Quackenbush</td>
<td>Oswego</td>
<td>John was a mechanic from Pulaski who owned JNR Automotive in Mexico. He also plowed driveways in the winter. As John drove west on the state highway in his plow truck, an eastbound pickup truck driver lost control of his vehicle. Crossing into the west-bound lane, he hit the plow truck head-on. John died at the scene. He was 57 years old.</td>
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<td>03/04/16</td>
<td>Jean Edy Silaire</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>Jean was driving a flat bed box truck north on Interstate 81, about 10 miles south of Syracuse. His truck went off the road about 6:40 am. It overturned and rolled several hundred feet before landing in the median and coming to rest on a guide rail. Ejected from the cab, Jean had severe head injuries and a broken right arm. Emergency crews rushed the Long Island man to hospital where he died soon after. Jean was 38 years old.</td>
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<td>2/2/2016</td>
<td>Frank J. Pasqua</td>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>A tractor-trailer driver, Frank was <strong>seriously injured</strong> when his truck crossed the road and hit an earth embankment near Ticonderoga. The trailer load went out the front of the trailer and detached the cab from the truck frame with enough force to embed it 10 feet into the earth. The front of the trailer caught fire, and spread to the crushed cab. It took more than 30 first responders two hours to get Frank out. Airlifted to hospital, the 53-year-old has had many surgeries to deal with the severe burns, including amputation of both legs above the knee, so he could survive.</td>
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<td>2/12/2016</td>
<td>Jordan &quot;Ichabod&quot; Soucy</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Jordan worked as a mechanic at Luke’s Garage in Tupper Lake. Described as a hard and reliable worker, his last day on the job included exposure to smoke while using an oxy-acetylene torch to remove ball joints. This exposure contributed to his death later that day. Jordan was 24.</td>
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<td>3/2/2016</td>
<td>James R. Gibbons</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>James worked for a defense contractor, servicing and repairing military equipment. He was exposed at work to a hazardous environment, which ultimately led to his death. The Carthage man was 73 years old.</td>
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<td>3/19/2016</td>
<td><strong>Gary Maxiner Jones</strong></td>
<td>St. Lawrence</td>
<td>Gary was an owner/operator of a second-generation Gouverneur farm supply and appliance store. He fell at the store, and was taken to a local hospital, where he later died. Gary was 76 years old.</td>
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<td>3/24/2016</td>
<td><strong>Michael J. Mahunik</strong></td>
<td>Cayuga</td>
<td>Michael was a certified installer of mobile and manufactured homes from Port Byron. About 7 am, he was driving his work van when it was hit by an eastbound Amtrak train in nearby Mentz. Ejected on impact, he was pronounced dead at the scene. Michael was 48 years old.</td>
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<td>3/26/2016</td>
<td><strong>David Mast</strong></td>
<td>St. Lawrence</td>
<td>David was operating a horse-drawn manure spreader on his family farm, on Route 37 near Hammond. The Amish boy fell from the seat, hitting his head on the implement’s wheels. A passer-by saw what happened, told his family, and called emergency responders, but the boy could not be saved. David was 9 years old.</td>
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<td>4/16/2016</td>
<td><strong>Very Reverend Charles G. Taylor (&quot;Father Chuck&quot;)</strong></td>
<td>Chenango</td>
<td>“Father Chuck” of New Berlin was using a chain saw to maintain church property, when he cut his leg and suffered a severe injury. He was pronounced dead at the scene. He was 64 years old.</td>
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<td>4/18/2016</td>
<td>James John Kasperski</td>
<td>Oneida/Onondaga</td>
<td>A flight instructor, James was in a plane with a student pilot, practicing touch and go maneuvers. After touching down, the plane went a short distance without gaining altitude; it struck a tree and crashed. The pilot got free and returned to the plane to get James out. Both men had severe burns because the fuel caught fire. James died the next day. He was 76 years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/18/2016</td>
<td>John Balio</td>
<td>Oneida/MA</td>
<td>John was a student pilot practicing touch and go maneuvers with his flight instructor. After touching down, the plane went a short distance without gaining altitude; it struck a tree and crashed. After getting free, John returned to the plane to get James out. Both men had severe burns because the fuel caught fire. John died a week later in a Boston hospital burn unit. He was 37 years old.</td>
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<td>4/29/2016</td>
<td>Scott Gerald Freeman</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>Scott was a logger working alone, deep in woods off Prine Road in Lysander. As he was cutting down a tree, one beside it broke free and fell on him. A family friend went to check on him that afternoon and discovered his body. Scott was pronounced dead at the scene from blunt force trauma. He was 55 years old.</td>
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<td>5/5/2016</td>
<td>William T. “Will” Bassett Jr.</td>
<td>Chenango</td>
<td>Will was a farm hand on a livestock farm in Sherburne, where he took care of his own beef cow. The ATV he was riding hit a piece of farm equipment; Will was thrown from, and pinned under, the vehicle. He died from his injuries at the hospital in Norwich. Will was 14 years old.</td>
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<td>5/17/2016</td>
<td>Dean Edward Mitchell</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Dean was a tractor-trailer driver from Oxbow. Hauling steel beams on Route 28N between Long Lake and Newcomb, his tractor-trailer swerved off onto the side of the road. The load shifted, causing the truck to flip over. Dean was pronounced dead at the scene. He was 58 years old.</td>
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<td>5/25/2016</td>
<td>Joseph Correia</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>Joseph was working at Syracuse Haulers Waste Removal in Dewitt. He was helping a co-worker remove a two-yard steel waste container from the bed of a lift truck. As the other worker moved it towards the lift gate, the 300-to-400-pound container rolled off the gate and hit Joseph on the head and leg. He was taken to the hospital where he died a short time later from the head injuries. Joseph was 58 years old.</td>
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<td>6/2/2016</td>
<td>Paul F. Somers</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>A logger, Paul was cutting down trees in a wooded area off a local road. A branch he was cutting got hung up as it fell. It swung back, hitting him. He was pronounced dead in the woods. Paul was 62 years old.</td>
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<td>6/15/2016</td>
<td>William T. Blewett</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>The owner of a Skaneateles tire service, Bill was helping a local farmer. While driving his dump truck on the New Seneca Turnpike just after noon, the vehicle went off the road and hit a culvert, and then a utility pole. Bill was pronounced dead at the scene from his injuries. He was 81 years old.</td>
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<td>6/21/2016</td>
<td>Thomas W. Palmer</td>
<td>Oneida</td>
<td>Thomas was a self-employed farmer from the Town of Lee. He was splitting wood on his farm, using a device attached to his tractor. When he tried to start his tractor from ground level, the tractor started to move because it had been left in forward gear. It struck Thomas and knocked him to the ground; he was run over by the tractor’s rear tire and the splitter. A family member found him later in the day. Thomas was 80 years old.</td>
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<td>7/3/2016</td>
<td>Phillip Clayton Harrington</td>
<td>Schuyler</td>
<td>Philip was operating his tractor to clear brush at his Alpine home. A large branch hit him and pinned him to the seat. He was found later in the evening and pronounced dead at the scene from his injuries. Phillip was 67 years old.</td>
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<td>7/11/2016</td>
<td>Shane D. Moore</td>
<td>Oswego</td>
<td>A logger from Oswego, Shane was using his chain saw to cut down large oak trees near Volney, north of Syracuse. His co-worker went to get some equipment; when he returned, he found Shane under a fallen tree branch. Shane was pronounced dead at the scene from his injuries. He was 54 years old.</td>
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<td>7/11/2016</td>
<td>Keith Edwards</td>
<td>Chemung</td>
<td>A tractor-trailer driver for Roehl Transport of Madison, Wisconsin, Keith was driving on I-86 just east of Elmira, returning home to Illinois with an empty trailer. His truck left the highway, hit a culvert and several trees. After overturning, the cab caught fire. Neighbors responded but flames made it hard to reach the cab. Keith died in the fire and was pronounced dead at the scene. He was 47 years old.</td>
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<td>7/20/2016</td>
<td>County Fire Coordinator John V. Scott</td>
<td>Tioga</td>
<td>With several other county employees, John was doing maintenance on a radio tower in Owego. A county vehicle backed into, and hit, the Tioga County Fire Coordinator. He was transported to the Wilson hospital where he died from his injuries. John was 71 years old.</td>
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<td>7/28/2016</td>
<td>Eric C. Hoffman</td>
<td>Steuben</td>
<td>A tractor-trailer driver for Roehl Transport, Eric was traveling I-86 near Corning, when his truck left the roadway and fell about 60 feet down an embankment. The trailer overturned and crushed the cab before it came to rest next to a house. Witnesses tried to save Eric, but could not get the cab door open. The Highland, Indiana man was pronounced dead at the scene from his injuries. Eric was 43 years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/28/2016</td>
<td>Gerhard “Gerry” Veit</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Gerry was playing in the 43rd annual Can-Am Rugby tournament in Saranac Lake. During the second match, playing in high-temperature and high-humidity conditions, he walked off the field and collapsed. The Ottawa, Canada “rugby legend” was transported to the local hospital where he was pronounced dead. He was 56 years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/10/2016</td>
<td>Donald W. Quayle</td>
<td>Oneida</td>
<td>Donald was a roofer from Newport, NY. While doing a repair job on a house, he fell from the roof. He was transported to the hospital where he died later from his injuries. Donald was 38 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Donald W. Quayle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/25/2016</td>
<td>David R. Togni</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>David was a groundskeeper for Westhill School District. Working on the school property in 2013, he upset a beehive and was stung repeatedly. Then, walking to the school building for nursing help, he fainted and fell to the ground. He suffered a traumatic brain injury as a result of hitting his head. David died from complications of that work-related injury three years later, at the age of 73 years.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="David R. Togni" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/4/2016</td>
<td>William John “Bill” Andrews</td>
<td>Steuben</td>
<td>A roofer from Cayuta, NY, Bill was working on the roof of a house when he fell. He was taken to a local hospital where he died later from his injuries. Bill was 37 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="William John “Bill” Andrews" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/13/2016</td>
<td>Phillip J. Miller</td>
<td>Cortland</td>
<td>A driver for Venice Trucking, Phillip was traveling on Interstate 81 to deliver materials in another state. The Homer native was involved in a chain-reaction 18-wheeler pile-up near Binghamton’s Exit 3. After his vehicle was struck by another tractor-trailer, Phillip’s truck and cab burst into flames. He was pronounced dead at the scene. He was 26 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Phillip J. Miller" /></td>
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*At all costs: Workers’ Memorial Week, 2017*
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>What do we know about what happened?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/15/2016</td>
<td>Kimberly Rhoades Samson</td>
<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>Kimberly’s employer broke into her apartment about 1 am, and beat her, claiming that she had money of his. Neighbors called 911 within minutes. An ambulance transported her to the hospital where she later lost consciousness and died. Kimberly was 47 years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/28/2016</td>
<td>Ronald C. Deming</td>
<td>Herkimer</td>
<td>A heavy equipment operator and maintenance worker for the NYS Thruway Authority, Ronald was removing a vehicle involved in a previous incident near Danube. The Little Falls man got out of his tow truck to direct and slow down traffic while a flatbed truck was getting the disabled vehicle off the shoulder. An SUV driving past hit him. He was pronounced dead at the scene from his injuries. Ronald was 58 years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9/2016</td>
<td>Robert S. (“Bobby”) Beach Jr.</td>
<td>Schuyler</td>
<td>Driving south on State Route 414 near Beaver Dams, NY, just before 1 am, Bobby’s truck left the roadway. It jumped a ditch, crashing head-on into a pine tree. The truck cab was crushed, pinning Bobby inside. Formerly of Cayuta, NY, the Pennsylvania resident was pronounced dead at the scene. He may have fallen asleep at the wheel. He was 45 years old.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/15/2016</td>
<td>Timothy D. “Auggie” Alguire</td>
<td>St. Lawrence</td>
<td>Auggie was a handyman and owner of Triple A Service Center in Massena. He was mowing a lawn at a Brasher Falls home. The rotating tractor mower blades caught on a dog-run cable attached to a wooden pole. The sudden tension on the cable broke the wooden post near its base. It became airborne, hitting Auggie in the head. He was pronounced dead at Massena Hospital. Auggie was 62 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Auggie Alguire" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20/2016</td>
<td>Eric John Stevens</td>
<td>Oswego</td>
<td>Eric was driving his US Postal Service delivery truck in Granby during snowy weather. He lost control of the truck on a wet road, going off the shoulder and hitting a tree. Eric was thrown from the truck and pinned after the vehicle overturned. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The Mexico resident was 30 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Eric John Stevens" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/26/2016</td>
<td>Rescue Chief Stephanie B. Potter</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>A 24-year member of the Moira Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Stephanie was the first woman to hold many line and executive officer positions there, including rescue chief. She suffered a line-of-duty death within hours of an EMS event. Stephanie was 48 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Stephanie B. Potter" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/26/2016</td>
<td>Fire Police Captain Merle L. Nell</td>
<td>Oneida</td>
<td>Merle was the Fire Police Captain for the Vernon Volunteer Fire Department, and a department member for 51 years. He had chest pains while working on a mutual aid fire call. In the ambulance on the way to the hospital he went into cardiac arrest, and died. Merle was 78 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Merle L. Nell" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/8/2016</td>
<td>William Schumacher</td>
<td>Tompkins</td>
<td>William was a seasonal UPS driver. He had just got out of his truck cab about 1 am in an Ithaca department store parking lot, to get something to eat. Out of the blue, a stranger shot and ran over him. Police were called but he was already dead. The man accused of his murder told the judge he believed he had killed Donald Trump. A Candor, NY resident, William was 52 years old.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="William Schumacher" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/2017</td>
<td>Trooper Brian S. Falb</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Brian spent most of his career with Troop B (Ray Brook), working in Clinton and Franklin counties. Like others from the region, he was sent to help with search and recovery efforts after the September 11, 2001 attack at the World Trade Center. He died from brain cancer, directly related to breathing toxic debris during those efforts. Brian was 47.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Trooper Brian S. Falb" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017</td>
<td>About 3,000 anonymous men and women</td>
<td>Upstate New York</td>
<td>An estimated 95,000 people die in the US each year of lingering job-related diseases and illnesses. About 3,000 Upstate New York likely are included in that number. Their deaths are due to such things as cancers and diseases affecting the heart, kidney, lungs, liver and skin. Most of these deaths are not counted in official records, often because no one connects the death to a job, or it’s hard to do.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Anonymous Men and Women" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017</td>
<td>At least 16 anonymous people</td>
<td>The 26 counties of Central and Northern NYS served by the OHCC</td>
<td>The circumstances of some people’s job-related deaths are confidential and not available to the public. Authorities who keep these records also do not yet have complete information about all 2016 traumatic deaths related to work.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Anonymous Men and Women" /></td>
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*At all costs: Workers’ Memorial Week, 2017*
Workers’ comp is not working

**Injured worker: “I just want my health back”**

The workers’ compensation system is supposed to be quick, fair and no fault (i.e., not blaming workers or employers). It originally was designed to help people when they are injured or get sick because of their job. Medical treatment, medicines and some of their wages are to be covered. In return, workers and their families can’t sue employers for negligence and the hazards that caused the injury, illness or death.

It may be a right for all workers in the state, but dealing with that system these days often is an unfair nightmare that refuses help. A Southern Tier resident, Thomas Parkinson, wants others to know the reality. (It’s a pseudonym, as he fears repercussions for speaking out.)

**Freak work incident changed Thomas’ life**

Thomas was hurt in a freak incident at work about eight years ago. It involved a huge electric shock. “I’m lucky to be alive, I’m lucky to even be here,” he says.

He’s been affected physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

“I lost lots of my eyesight; I don’t have the vision I used to have,” he says. It may be because of a bright flash from the electrical shock.

“My injury has ruined my memory,” Thomas adds. “It really hurts if I have to think and concentrate. When I get headaches, it feels like my eyes are going to blow right out of my head.”

Those headaches bring on “head pressure 24/7. It’s getting so bad that nothing stops my pain, my stimulator and medicine don’t work. I’ve had to go to the ER many times to get morphine.” And that’s after he tries to “suffer it out” lying in bed, to avoid going to the hospital.

The injury was a life-changing event. “Before my injury I was on the go all the time, hunting, fishing, etc. Now I’m limited. I never know what kind of day I’m going to have. That’s a bad feeling every day that I wake up.”

“I miss going to all my kids' activities,” Thomas says. “I’m a totally different person. My family and people I hung out with say I’m different now.”

**Workers’ comp doesn’t care; investigate the “independent” medical examiners**

It’s hard enough to deal with these traumatic injuries. It’s even worse when the workers’ compensation system -- which is supposed to cover lost wages and medical bills -- isn’t there for injured workers and their families. The process has been “a mess” for Thomas.

“The insurance company makes all the calls, but I lost my health. Financially, they ruin you too, which makes it worse. They can have all the money, and give me my health back!”
His main message: “the IME -- which supposedly stands for independent medical examiner -- is far from it! Instead of “independent”, it should be “insurance” medical examiner, because they all seem to work for the insurance companies. They should be investigated.”

He learned his lesson the hard way. “When I was first injured, I didn’t think I’d have to go through all this. Everyone I talked with warned me that I’d need a lawyer.” He did get one, but “it’s been so many years of pain. You lose a lot and either workers’ compensation knows that, or they just don’t care.”

Thomas isn’t alone

Thomas’ story is typical of many workers who deal with the compensation system in New York State and the US.

Many employers fight claims on general principle. Insurance companies try to save money and increase profits by denying benefits. Workers then don’t get treatments or income they need when they should.

So they don’t get better and the stress of constantly fighting for their rights takes its toll on them, their families, and their communities.

Besides the emotional toll, workers, their families, and the limited public social safety nets pay about 80 percent of all costs of job-related injuries and illnesses in the US. Employers -- and their insurance companies -- are paying less and less to cover costs that are really theirs. It’s gone down about 30 percent in 18 years ago.

The myths about “crippling costs”, “fraud” and “stupid” workers “hurting themselves” are just that -- untrue. Fraud rates are very, very low and workers get hurt or sick because of hazards that have not been fixed (the OSHA law says employers must provide safe and healthy workplaces).

As other injured workers have said, “We pay the cost” of broken systems that allow people to get hurt, sick, or killed just for going to work, and having to fight for compensation because their employers didn’t protect them in the first place.

Face it: We are all sickened by inequality at work

Whether it is a gaping gulf in pay, job insecurity or job discrimination based on your class, gender or race, a divided workplace is bad for your health. Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the global union body ITUC, reveals how inequality is a real pain in the workplace – and outlines how unions can make things better. (Reprinted with permission; original at http://www.hazards.org/vulnerableworkers/ituc28april.htm)

When Babul Khan (right) lost two of his four sons in an inferno at Gadani shipbreaking yard on 1 November 2016, it was a tragedy but it wasn’t a surprise. Like all the 26 workers who were killed when an oil tanker was blasted apart at Pakistan’s largest shipbreaking yard, 18-year-old Ghulam Hyder and 32-year-old Alam Khan were insecure workers. Disposable workers.

The yard was shut in the immediate wake of the deaths. Soon, though, it was business as usual – and that meant, inevitably, more deaths. At least five workers died in a fire on a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) container ship at the shipbreaking yard on 9 January 2017. The yard was making money; a steady stream of horrific fatalities was just collateral damage.
Who lives and who dies at work is not an accident of chance. The emergence of increasingly precarious forms of employment in convoluted supply chains was as deliberate as it was deadly. It creates a working world where the bad actors set a wage, conditions and employment rights benchmark which sucks down conditions across the global economy.

Maintaining a system of indecent work has always required an extra ingredient – a divided workforce. Where workers do not have a collective voice and where jobs are by design segregated by gender, race or class those divisions can perpetuate disadvantage and leave the most exploited workers powerless while undercutting the conditions of the rest.

All this comes at a price. At the top of the workplace pecking order, those making the decisions don’t just receive multipliers more in income and perks, they get to live many years longer to enjoy them.

Where workers do not have a collective voice and where jobs are by design segregated by gender, race or class those divisions can perpetuate disadvantage and leave the most exploited workers powerless while undercutting the conditions of the rest.

Don’t look, don’t find

Thumb through the classic occupational medicine textbooks, and you get a picture of work related disease dominated by exposures in mines, mills and factories. Male exposures. Dust diseases like pneumoconiosis and the pollution and the physical strains hauling large weights over long hours had a devastating impact on the lives of the men studied, dramatically curtailing life expectancy.

Women worked, but were treated as ‘confounding factors’ in research. Likewise black and minority workers. It was a bias that persisted through much of the 20th century, and it perpetuated a vision of industrial health problems that was white and male.

It was a big white lie. Women working in the caring professions and as supermarket cashiers can lift more in a shift than a construction worker or a miner, and frequently combine their work with a second unpaid shift of domestic work. From tea plantations to brick kilns to flower fields worldwide, women do arduous work, frequently with young children in tow.

A study published in the September 2016 issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* concluded the total hours burden borne by women who put in long hours for the bulk of their careers led to ‘alarming increases’ in life-threatening illnesses, including heart disease and cancer.

Yet even today, the occupational exposures in female dominated trades like caring and cleaning are under-researched and under-appreciated. It may be that women, often under-represented in hazardous trades like construction and mining, are less likely to feature in the occupational fatality statistics. But occupational disease deaths dwarf the work fatalities total, and there is good reason to suppose women are every bit as vulnerable to these diseases. The chemicals are there, the musculoskeletal hazards are there, and the stresses are there. It is just the studies and the give-a-damn that is missing.

Take cancer. We know about the lung and other cancer risks facing men employed in dusty trades, and this has been recognised for many years and is sometimes state compensated.

In women, the biggest occupational cancer killer is likely to be breast cancer, caused by shiftwork and working in a “toxic soup” of hormone disrupting

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*At all costs: Workers’ Memorial Week, 2017*
chemicals in agriculture, plastics, food packaging, metal manufacture and other jobs. (4) Is breast cancer a universally recognised and compensated occupational condition? No.

We know women’s wages are lower than men’s, not because women’s work is worth less, but because of glass ceilings and gender tramlines that keep women ‘in their place’. If society places less value on women’s work, makes fewer efforts to assess its effects and takes less care in mitigating its consequences, then that will, inevitably, be reflected in unrecognised but substantial work related ill-health.

At a disadvantage

It is easy to think of carcinogens like asbestos and silica as equal opportunities killers – if you are exposed, then you may get the cancer. But there’s not much asbestos flying around boardrooms, and while construction workers might be predominantly male, they are also predominantly working class.

**Occupational cancer**, like all occupational conditions from stress, to dermatitis to lung disease, is a blue collar ailment. Not the old blue collar of the factory and the mine, but one that also includes toil in garment factories and food processing, cleaning, caring and a miscellany of other trades. And within the workforce, certain groups face the bulk of the risk.

Like gender, race has been treated historically as a ‘confounder’ in occupational health research, so the literature on racial inequalities in occupational health is threadbare. But as occupational risk increases the lower you go down the social class ladder, race as surely compounds this.

In the early 1970s, the [US government’s occupational health research body NIOSH](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh) investigated the risks to workers on the coke ovens fuelling steel works and factories. It was apparent coke oven workers faced a greatly increased risk of lung cancer. But on closer inspection it became clear black workers were far more likely to be given the worst jobs with the highest exposures, at the top of the coke oven.

Without this observation, it would in all probability have been assumed the increased lung cancer rates in black workers was to do with race, rather than exposures.

This isn’t an historical artefact. In 2011, NIOSH noted: “African-American, Hispanic, and immigrant workers are disproportionately employed in some of the most dangerous occupations. African-American males are twice as likely as non-Hispanic white males to work in service occupations and as labourers, fabricators, and operators, yet are half as likely to be in managerial or professional specialty occupations.

“The result is that the African-American injury rate is about a third higher for both African-American males and females compared to white non-Hispanic workers.”

Sometimes the process is more blatant. In December 2009, the [Studsvik Memphis Processing Facility](https://www.studsvik.com) in Tennessee, a US company that processes nuclear waste, agreed to settle compensation
claims with black employees who were assigned to jobs with higher radiation exposures but who then had their dose meters doctored to show lower exposure levels.

In India, the workers employed informally as manual scavengers – removing by hand human excrement from homes – are drawn exclusively from the persecuted ‘low caste’ Dalit community. The health consequences - constant nausea and headaches, respiratory and skin diseases, anaemia, diarrhoea, vomiting, jaundice, trachoma, and deadly asphyxia – are limited entirely to this community.

A 2017 study on racial and ethnic differences in accident rates(5) warned about discrimination-based disparities in workplace injury risk. It noted: “Based on our findings, policymakers and regulators may need to review whether employers are systematically assigning people of different races and ethnicities different jobs or job tasks according to the risk.”

**Distressing work**

Any notion that knowledge and enlightenment is creating a working world that is by increments getting safer and healthier is misguided. Instead ‘ordinary’ jobs, not commonly associated with excessive dangers, are driving many workers to a state of perpetual and sometimes deadly desperation.

Reviewing evidence of a sharp spike in death rates among white working class American males,(6) occupational health specialists at the University of Massachusetts Lowell identified job insecurity, discrimination and a lack of control at work behind an increase in ‘diseases of distress’– alcohol and drug-related diseases and suicides.(7) Studies in France have estimated the annual work-related suicide toll – which has risen sharply in recent years - at several hundred and possibly thousands of deaths each year.(8) Reports in the United States, Australia, France, Japan, China, India and Taiwan and the UK(9) all point to a steep rise in work-related suicides. There is a clear social class association evident and a common set of workplace abuses witnessed time again.

An official March 2017 report in the UK noted individuals working in roles as managers, directors and senior officials – the highest paid occupational band – had the lowest risk of suicide. Among corporate managers and directors the risk of suicide was more than 70 per cent lower for both sexes. Contrast that with construction where low skilled male labourers, had a three times higher risk of suicide than the national average.(10)

**These deaths should not dismissed as a last cry for help. They are a last cry of protest.** [emphasis added] At the core of the problem is a system where workers are treated increasingly as just another component, a variable on a business spread sheet to be cut, squeezed or extended beyond operational capacity. [For more about these kinds of deaths, see the stories on page 27 of this booklet.]

The increasingly ‘contingent’ workforce - part-time, temporary, zero hours [no guaranteed hours of work] and contract workers - favoured in the deregulated global workplace face higher rates of occupational injuries(11) and illnesses.(12) In the UK, the government safety regulator found insecure employment is creating an army of disposable workers, too scared to take sick leave and who are fired when they can no longer perform.(13)

But workers with, ostensibly, permanent jobs are also harmed. A study of the impact of the recent ‘Great Recession’ discovered just watching people lose their jobs all around you will make you sick, even if you held onto your own.(14)

The tragedy is that job insecurity isn’t an irresistible force of nature. It is a choice. Work can be decent and productive and profitable. But corporate boards are judged by this year’s bottom line and at this year’s AGM. Corporate social responsibility is frequently little more than cynical public relations, not an operating imperative.
Low pay, high risks

It is a perversity of work that the language of ‘risks and rewards’ is used to justify soaring boardroom pay packets and the growing income inequality at work. But the workers most frequently compelled to take genuine risks – to life, to limb, to health – are those who receive the lowest financial rewards.

Low pay is in all probability the most clear indicator of the degree of health and safety risk a worker will face. Low pay affects your choices. It influences whether you work more overtime, extra shifts, report an injury, take sick leave. And it leaves you in jobs that typically have the insecure, dirty and dangerous hallmarks of risky work. Or jobs that are mind-numbingly dull and depressing. Or scratching a living from multiple jobs.(15)

The major Whitehall II study of UK civil servants showed that stress, sickness and heart disease all went up as your employment grade went down.

Whole categories of workers are more likely to populate the low pay classification, and have greater employment and health vulnerability as result. Migrant workers, like the captive labour from South Asia building the glistening stadiums in Qatar, face unpolicied, uncounted but shocking injury and ill-health risks. Perm in other factors – ill-health, disability, age – and a lack of employment options translates to fewer choices and fewer opportunities to just say no.

Workers need the added volume of a collective voice to make themselves heard. And that is where unions come in.

The union effect

If you want better pay, more job security, lower injury and ill-health rates and better terms and conditions at work, then unions have a proven track record.(16) In a virtuous circle, unions make workplaces fairer, which makes the union voice stronger, which makes workplaces safer and healthier:

Wherever there is an active union presence, this union effect is likely to be observed – and there are economic benefits too.

A September 2013 study covering 31 industrialised countries, published in the journal Social Science & Medicine(16) concluded: “Union density is the most important external determinant of workplace psychosocial safety climate, health and GDP.” The paper added “worker health is good for the economy, and should be considered in national health and productivity accounting. Eroding unionism may not be good for worker health or the economy either”.

Unions narrow workplace inequalities, with a concomitant benefit to health. In a harsh economic climate unions continue to make work fairer. The same collective strength that delivers better wages also makes work safer and healthier.

It is an indictment of the economic and political process that globalisation has seen a fragmentation of work and a decimation of work rights, causing inevitable harm to the public health.(17)

But it does put in sharp relief the undeniable benefits of trade unions.(18) It’s not just about wages, or equality or safety. It is about dignity and respect at work.

The shame is that without unions this basic decency is in increasingly short supply.
Key references (and for more information)


11. At the company's mercy: Protecting contingent workers from unsafe working conditions, Center for Progressive Reform, 2013.


18. The Union Dividend: It reaches beyond members, CEPR, September 2015.

   The Union Advantage: How unions make work better and society fairer, TUC, 2014
Deaths of despair on the rise in US

Work takes a toll in many ways, wherever we work

In 2016, about 3,000 people likely died in Upstate New York because of a job they did. That’s based on national estimates of about 95,800 people dying in the United States every year from an occupational disease.

Work-related diseases and illnesses are the often-invisible result of hazards at work. They are hidden amongst the most common causes of death: heart disease, strokes, cancers, problems in the lungs, kidneys or liver, or musculoskeletal disorders. Without systems to count which ones are job-related, scientists make their best guesses with available information -- if they decide to look for the numbers.

Some of the most difficult accounts to deal with are the March 2017 reports from Great Britain and the United States. They point to alarming trends in suicides and related deaths linked to the jobs people have, and the inequalities behind them.

Years ago, karoshi became the word used in Japan to describe deaths from overwork -- long hours of work without end that lead to stroke, heart attacks and suicides. In England now, work pressures are pushing teachers to the brink of suicide, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) reported in April, 2017. The latest US figures, from 2014, say that about 230 people were reported to have died that year of job-related suicide; the real numbers are likely much higher.

The international trends are behind this year’s theme for Workers’ Memorial Day from the International Trade Union: Unsafe and unfair – discrimination on the job hurts us all. (See pages 19 - 24 for more details.)

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<th>Why do workers kill themselves?</th>
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<td>Hazards has researched work-related suicides for two decades. Top factors implicated seem to be:</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>job insecurity</strong> – lack of employment protection, zero hours (no time limits) contracts, temporary work, gig economy jobs, economic uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>overwork</strong> – long hours, too much work, unattainable targets</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>stress</strong> – too little control over tasks, too demanding work, lack of support</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>poor management and unfairness at work</strong> – harassment, bullying, punitive work targets and disciplinary processes, victimization</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>emotional labour</strong> – caring work, dealing with individuals in physical or emotional distress</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>trauma</strong> – exposure to disturbing or harrowing images or incidents - emergency services, health services, armed forces, post traumatic stress</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>work-related harm</strong> – difficulty coping with stressful symptoms (for example, work-related tinnitus) or pain, distress or incapacity caused by work-related injuries and diseases</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>hazards that affect your mental health</strong> – like neurotoxic solvents (e.g., carbon disulphide, organic solvents), pesticides (e.g., organophosphate or carbamate insecticides) or metals including mercury, lead and beryllium</td>
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<td>✓ <strong>access to means</strong> – the knowledge or the tools to make suicide easier to achieve, for example: health service workers and drugs/knowledge; agricultural workers and pesticides/guns</td>
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From Hazards, http://www.hazards.org/suicide/suicidalwork.htm#whyworkers
Work-related suicides: When work is so bad that you kill yourself

Jordan Barab, Confined Space blog
-- March 29, 2017

What can we say about working conditions when work becomes so bad that people kill themselves?

Leeds University Research Sarah Waters published an article in Great Britain’s Hazards Magazine reviewing how different countries address workplace suicide and how little is known about the phenomenon.

Studies in the United States, Australia, France, Japan, China, India and Taiwan point to a steep rise in work suicides. Researchers have linked these suicides to a generalised deterioration of working conditions, including unmanageable workloads and increased job insecurity.

Despite evidence of a comparable rise in the UK, workplace suicide remains a largely hidden phenomenon that is unrecognised in legislation, absent from official statistics, overlooked by the authorities and widely misunderstood.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 282 workplace suicides occurred in 2013, the highest number recorded since the CFOI (Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries) series began in 1992. That number stayed about the same in 2014, dropping 18% to 229 in 2015. The BLS published a recent study of workplace suicide in the United States. They note that it is extremely challenging determining whether suicides are workplace related. That study concluded that workplace suicide is a relatively small, but growing, occupational concern, and had some interesting conclusions:

- From 2007 to 2009, a period that included the Great Recession, fatal work injuries declined rapidly, yet workplace suicides increased and have remained elevated.
- 45- to 54-year-old males had the highest likelihood of committing workplace suicide.
- Employees working for wage or salary incurred the majority of workplace suicides, but self-employed workers had a higher propensity.
- Workers in the public sector had a higher propensity for workplace suicide while workers in the private sector suffered the majority of these fatalities.
- The private industry sectors with the highest propensities for workplace suicide were finance and insurance; professional, scientific and technical services; and health care and social assistance.
- Management occupations accounted for the highest share of workplace suicides, but legal occupations had the highest propensity.
- First-line supervisors of retail-sales workers committed the second-most workplace suicides.
- Police and sheriff’s patrol officers and security guards incurred the third- and fourth-most workplace suicides, respectively.

What is the cause of workplace suicide?

Waters notes that “there is scant discussion of why work or working conditions might drive some employees to suicide. There are no recommendations on how rising workplace suicides might be tackled or addressed.” The article cites one study that suggests that “job insecurity, zero hour contracts and workplace downsizing are important risk factors in suicide.”

Waters has studied the letters written by individuals in 82 suicide cases across three companies during the period 2005-2015.
In each company, there was a peak of suicides at times of restructuring, when new management policies were being introduced either to increase workloads through raised production targets or to cut company costs by shedding jobs. In most of these letters, employees blame work or their experiences of work as the cause of their self-killing.

The letters do not point to a single factor or cause, but evoke experiences of working life that has been disrupted by chaotic restructuring, forced redeployment, increased production targets or management bullying.

Waters ends with a plea that we “recognise, document and analyse workplace suicide, so that we can deal with its devastating human and societal consequences.”


Why white working class Americans are dying “deaths of despair”

By Stephen Franklin Published in In These Times -- March 25, 2017

He was alone and miserable, cleaning up a strike station in Peoria, Illinois, where members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) had lived in the heat and the cold.

The UAW had just folded its standoff against Caterpillar after years of strikes and was returning to work largely on the terms the company had first laid down.

“We were losers when we came back from Vietnam,” the muscular, middle-aged worker told me nearly two decades ago. “We were losers when we put up this battle and now we’ve lost the American dream.”

Workers like him have been losing more than their American dream. They’ve been losing their lives.

In 2015, Princeton University economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton pointed out that the death rate of middle-aged white Americans had changed direction and spurted upward, reversing years of steady decline. The “turnaround” was mostly driven by the deaths of those with a high school degree or less.

Delving into questions raised by that study, the economists’ latest analysis finds that the grim reality has continued to touch working class white Americans with limited educations. And they predict that these middle-aged Americans are likely “to do much worse in old age than those currently older than 65.”

In general, the longer you’re in the labor force, the more you earn — in part because you understand your job better and you’re more efficient at your job, you’ve had on-the-job training, you belong to a union, and so your wages go up with age. That’s happened less and less the later and later you’ve been born and the later you enter this labor market.

Anne Case, NPR, March 23, 2017
Behind the death spiral are growing rates of suicide, drug and alcohol poisoning, liver diseases and cirrhosis, the economists say. They liken the trend to the sudden emergence of an iceberg rising up out the water.

Why?

What makes these middle-aged white workers different from black or Latino workers in the United States in the same economic straits, or from workers in similarly rich nations—all of whom show declining death rates?

Indeed, as Deaton explained in a recent NPR interview, these white Americans’ death rate now exceeds the rate for black Americans “as a whole.”

“It’s as if poorly educated whites have now taken over from blacks as the lowest rung in terms of mortality rates,” he said in the interview.

Without pinpointing a specific reason, Deaton and Case suggest that the cycle of “deaths of despair” comes from the collapse of jobs and benefits for these workers who then tumble into heart-breaking problems of physical and emotional health, family difficulties, drugs and just plain survival. It is a portrait of cascading hopelessness, where workers go from stagnating wages to joblessness to dropping out of the job market.

If you’ve spent any time listening to workers’ heartbreak for the last few decades as I have, however, it is saddening to hear the shock and controversy among experts over the economists’ last two reports.

They could have heard the cries for help building.

All they needed to do was spend some time in a union hall, hang out at an unemployment office, kill an afternoon in a bar or the gloomy living room of a worker on the decline to hear the despair that fills workers’ hearts. But this is an especially American tragedy rooted in our workaday DNA.

An American dilemma because when good-paying jobs began to vanish for workers with a strong back, grit to do a tough or mindless job and little education besides high school, it’s like somebody stole their soul.

Many blue-collar workers, who once earned decent wages, thought they owned their jobs and what comes with it. But most American companies don’t agree.

Many American workers once thought that their tire factory, steel plant, paper mill or garment mill would never shut down and would be there for their children. But fate dealt a different hand for workers

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**Midlife mortality from “deaths of despair” across countries**

Men and women ages 50-54, deaths by drugs, alcohol, and suicide

![Graph showing midlife mortality from “deaths of despair” across countries](image)

and their families in Akron, Gary, Youngstown and across the South, where the garment industry vanished in a huff.

Traveling to these places and more, I realized that the most lethal wound from the hollowing out of blue-collar jobs for American workers is the psychic one. Seeking out local union officials in the 1980s at places where the jobs had disappeared, I found that some had died suddenly or sunk into solemn silence. They had tried to stand tall, to help their rank and file move on, but there was little help from their union or their government and the future kept on darkening all around them.

Helping these workers hasn’t been easy because so many blame themselves and not the companies or the American way of doing business for the misfortune that suddenly enveloped them. One day I talked a young worker out of suicide. He’d failed to get back on his feet after his small auto parts plant in southern Michigan had shut down and blamed himself.

I’ve met with wives of striking workers in Decatur, Illinois, who came together to help each other because their husbands had slipped into silence or were numbing themselves with alcohol. I spent time with a grief-stricken husband, whose union was on strike, and whose wife died during a demonstration.

I spoke often with a labor-friendly priest in Decatur, who was stunned by the last words a wife gave her husband. He had returned unhappily to work after a long-term lockout and had been fatally injured in a car accident. She told her dying husband that at least he would not have to go back to the job. Not long ago, I met with a middle-aged worker in Chicago, the sole source of income for her family, who fell into a deep depression when Mondelez International said it was moving a large chunk of workers’ jobs at its Nabisco bakery to Mexico.

Soon after she was laid off, a job opened up and she was called back. But her fears about her future had already taken a powerful toll.

After hearing news of the layoffs, the woman had begun losing her hair until she was totally bald. The bakery workers union is fighting the move with a boycott of the firm’s Mexican-made products.

Unaware of her mother’s situation, her teenage daughter was stunned when she returned home from college and saw her mother. “I was scared,” she said. “I thought she had cancer.”

She didn’t have cancer. But she had, indeed, succumbed to an illness—heartbreak.

Used with the author's permission from: http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/19999/why_white_working_class_americans_are_dying_deaths_of_despair
A lesson in preventing occupational disease

Food/drink/e-cig flavorings -- nice smells, but they kill workers

Like that buttery flavor in popcorn and other foods? What about flavored milk? Are you roasting or grinding coffee? Know someone who is?

Thousands of flavorings can be used in food we eat and drink, designed to provide a “good” taste or smell. The natural or synthetic chemicals often are complicated mixtures. The box lists examples of where they can be found.

We drink and eat these things, assuming the nice smell or taste is natural or it’s a tested chemical that won’t harm anyone or our environments.

Turns out that little about these flavorings is regulated, and that’s not unusual. The systems in the United States -- unlike those in Europe -- allow people to be guinea pigs to test the effects of chemicals in all kinds of products, especially if they’re workers.

Like many of the 80,00-plus chemicals used today, flavorings aren’t tested very much before they are used in workplaces or put into consumer products. They certainly don’t have to be tested for how they might behave in a product with other ingredients, and rarely for their long-term effects. That means little is known about how most flavorings can affect workers’ health. These days, it’s also true of substitutes that companies come up with when ingredients are banned or there is pressure to replace them; they may not be much better -- and sometimes are worse -- than the original.

“Popcorn lung” linked to flavoring chemical

A rare disease connected “popcorn lung” to butter flavoring chemicals in a small group of Jasper, Missouri popcorn plant workers in 1999 - 2001. It took time and the right diagnosis: “bronchiolitis obliterans” (BO). The small airways in their lungs were eaten up, in a relatively short time. The effects can’t be reversed; those who get it need lung replacements or die without them. As one man described it, “"Take four bulldozers and put them on your chest. Then put an elephant on top of those bulldozers.”

In this case, the finger pointed to a chemical called diacetyl. It is a naturally-occurring substance found in beer, butter, cheese, coffee, fruit, and other foods. Called 2,3-butanedione, it’s been the main ingredient in artificial butter flavoring. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) still calls it “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS).

But that’s not what others say. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Occupational Health Branch of
California’s Public Health Department have warned health care providers about symptoms to watch for in people working with flavorings. They include cough (without phlegm usually), fever, progressive shortness of breath, or wheezing. Some get asthma or their asthma gets worse. NIOSH also recommended an extremely-low level of diacetyl in the air (5 parts per billion).

Hundreds of workers in factories where the chemical is produced, mixed and applied have been told they have the often-fatal disease. Some have died, while others have been able to get lung transplants. Too often, workers have been misdiagnosed, told that their symptoms are related to asthma, pneumonia or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). This delays treatment and other help.

In 2016, NIOSH’s Dr. Kathleen Kreiss talked about diacetyl workers’ breathing tests. “We now think that most of those (people) with any spirometric abnormality may have had obliterative bronchiolitis”.

When US workers initiated a lawsuit against the flavoring industry in 2004, a 1993 German study came to light. It showed that four hours of breathing diacetyl caused an “abundance of symptoms” of respiratory problems in lab rats; all those that inhaled medium and high concentrations died.

A doctor at the top US lung disease hospital diagnosed a heavy consumer of microwave popcorn with BO in 2007. The day after that became public, the largest popcorn companies said they would stop using diacetyl but it was hard to find a less toxic substitute. (For more history, see https://socialchangenvu.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/popcorn-lung-dulberg.pdf and http://www.defendingscience.org/case-studies/case-regulatory-failure-popcorn-workers-lung.)
Flavoring and microwave popcorn workers aren’t the only ones who can get sick from contact with flavorings. Diacetyl and its cousin, 2,3-pentanedione, are also naturally produced and released when coffee beans are roasted or ground. In 2012, five former workers of a Tyler, Texas coffee processing plant were diagnosed with BO; an investigation found another 11 co-workers with respiratory diseases. “Coffee roasters’ lung” became another name for the disease.

Since then, measurements in other coffee roasting places have found dangerous levels of diacetyl. In 2015, reporters found coffee factory workers died of lung diseases back in the 1980s and others may be affected in the growing coffee roasting sector (http://archive.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/gasping-for-action-b99440601z1-291548941.html).

At the same time, more flavorings have been found to cause BO (see box) and the class of chemicals have been linked to other lung diseases such as:

- emphysema
- asthma
- hypersensitivity pneumonitis
- granulomatous disease
- interstitial lung disease

### Flavoring chemicals known to cause lung disease, so far

- diacetyl (2,3-butanedione): CAS No. 431-03-08
- acetyl propionyl (2,3-pentanedione): CAS No. 600-14-6
- acetyl butyryl (2,3-hexanediene): CAS No. 3848-24-6
- acetyl valeryl (2,3-heptanediene): CAS No. 96-04-8

(A CAS number is a unique “fingerprint” assigned to a chemical. Use it instead of the name to get information about a chemical.)

### It’s hard to connect dots, warn people about job-related hazards

If people do get sick because of a flavoring (or something else at work), it’s not always easy to connect that to a specific chemical. Doctors don’t know a lot about how people’s jobs affect their health. Workers may not make the connection, or be believed if they do. Patterns don’t appear until the “guinea pigs” have been studied or “coincidences” happen too often. Or people are told their symptoms are related to more common health problems.

Health and safety does improve with good regulations that are enforced. Yet federal OSHA has no regulation about flavoring chemicals. The agency did not act after a 2007 multi-union petition for an emergency standard. Instead, it issued guidance, warning that many workplace safety data sheets “do not reflect any new information regarding health effects and respiratory hazards associated with diacetyl or FFCD (food flavorings containing diacetyl).” Under a new administration, the agency put out more information in 2010 (including (https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/flavoringlung/index.html).

California is the only US state with a health and safety regulation about diacetyl (https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5197.html). It requires employers to keep diacetyl and butter flavoring levels at the lowest amount that can be measured in the air, medical testing and more. This followed pressure from unions and others, discovery
Of two cases of BO in southern California, and a major public health surveillance program. State occupational health officials found 23 percent of workers in 20 flavoring manufacturing companies had abnormal lung tests.

It was difficult to connect the dots because the United States does not have a system to do that. As Allen Parmet, the doctor who diagnosed the popcorn workers, told the Atlanta Journal Sentinel,

_We’re floundering around with these chemicals in the workplace as if it was the 1830s. Unless the patient comes in and says, 'I’m a coffee worker, I’m exposed to diacetyl, I potentially have bronchiolitis obliterans and here’s the paperwork' — unless that happens — nobody gets it. They’ll just treat him for asthma or smoker’s cough._

_If we had the will, we could fix it._

It’s also very hard to get hazard warnings to those who need them. When California’s Hazard Evaluation System and Information Service (HESIS) wanted to send diacetyl information to users, it had no way to identify who needed the information. A summer student ended up going through phone books, calling workplaces that might use the chemical.

The legislation SB 193, passed in 2013, now allows HESIS to demand names and addresses of customers purchasing specific chemicals that end up in state workplaces. This public health right-to-know rule allows the agency to target warnings about serious hazards to employers and workers.

Meanwhile, lawyers continue to get new clients and workers still know little about the hazards of these chemicals. To learn more, see the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health fact sheet for workers in the flavoring sector ([http://coshnetwork.org/sites/default/files/FoodWorkersBeware.pdf](http://coshnetwork.org/sites/default/files/FoodWorkersBeware.pdf)).

**What are lessons from the use of flavorings, so far?**

- preventing occupational diseases requires a policy of no market for chemicals if there is no data about its hazards
- people can get really sick -- and die -- when it's assumed that a chemical is “safe” and tested
- occupational diseases are too often misdiagnosed or not recognized
- sick workers need health care providers who know about work-related hazards
- substitutes for banned or very toxic substances often are related to the problem chemicals, and therefore still hazardous, so they should not be allowed or used
- less toxic substitutes can be found by asking why a chemical is needed, and looking for other ways to meet that goal (if it’s really important) -- it’s called “green chemistry”
- companies still hide information about the hazards of their products -- test results, or full information about ingredients or hazard information on data sheets (required by law)
- information is not enough to stop people getting sick because of work; regulation is needed, and possible, when there’s a will and sufficient pressure in the right context
- companies respond to publicity and legal action
- is “the public” willing to risk people’s lives for the sake of a flavor? how will people react if they see coffee shop workers wearing respirators? or ventilation hoods over coffee grinding activities?

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**Worried about working with flavorings? roasting coffee?**

The **Occupational Health Clinical Centers** can help:

- get information about the hazards of products you use or work you do;
- provide an accurate diagnosis if you’re having breathing problems;
  - file workers’ compensation claims;
  - provide training/education about ways to prevent respiratory diseases; and
- answer questions from you, your employer.

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_**At all costs:** Workers’ Memorial Week, 2017_
Trump’s policies are already making workplaces more toxic

by Elizabeth Grossman

The “wellbeing of America and the American worker is my North Star,” President Donald Trump trumpeted at a recent White House event.

But the Trump administration’s policies are already adversely affecting workers’ health by undermining occupational illness prevention—including for cancers, musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory diseases that afflict hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers.

“It couldn’t get much worse in terms of the federal government’s role in preventing the number of occupational illnesses and diseases,” said Charlotte Brody, vice president of health initiatives at BlueGreen Alliance, an alliance of labor unions and environmental organizations.

Or, as Sidney Shapiro, a professor at Wake Forest’s law school, put it, “We weren’t doing this terribly well under a reasonably friendly administration so all bets are it’s now going to fall completely apart.”

Deaths from occupational diseases

Occupational fatalities remain a grave problem in the United States. In 2015, 4,836 people died on the job. Yet, in 2003 the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimated that approximately ten times more Americans die per year from occupational diseases. (Ten years later, others in the know put the number at 95,808.) Of the 2,905,900 non-fatal workplace injuries and illnesses the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) catalogued in 2015, about 187,900 were job-related illnesses.

This number, like all official records of occupational illness, is considered a significant undercount.

Among other omissions, including very small workplaces and self-employed workers, these numbers don’t include work-related illnesses diagnosed after someone left a job or fully account for chronic conditions.

“Combine that with people who are immigrant workers with limited English, who are not organized, and low-income, who are vulnerable to exploitation because they'll do anything to get a job—and they're less likely to object to unsafe working conditions, less likely to seek help or speak up,” says Michael Wilson, director of the occupational and environmental health program at BlueGreen Alliance.

The most frequently reported U.S. work-related health problems include respiratory and skin diseases along with musculoskeletal disorders. Musculoskeletal problems account for about one-third of all reported workplace illnesses and injuries and affect workers in industries ranging from meatpacking to nursing, shipyards, cleaning services, manufacturing and retail grocery stores.

Cancer is one of the hardest occupational diseases to account for given the typically long time between exposure and diagnosis. But the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate is that past exposure in the workplace caused between 45,872 and 91,745 new cancer cases. That estimate, which the CDC said is likely an underestimate, was for a single year.

Delays cost lives

Connecting workplace exposure and disease diagnosis precisely can be complicated. But the links
between occupational exposure to silica and beryllium dust and lung disease are well documented. Cases of these occupational diseases may well increase under Trump.

This month, OSHA delayed by three months the date on which its new silica exposure safety standard for the construction industry will take effect. This is the first update of the standard in more than 40 years and will reduce by half the silica dust level to which most workers can be exposed and prevent about 900 new silicosis cases each year.

Operating stationary saws without proper dust controls can produce deadly silica dust. (Photo from University of Washington, in OSHA’s Controlling silica exposures in construction, 2009.

OSHA says the delay will allow it to “conduct additional outreach and provide educational materials and guidance for employers.” But the rule “has been decades in the making” and “will save more 600 lives each year,” according to Jessica Martinez, co-executive director of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health. Major industry trade associations, including in construction, oil and gas extraction, have long opposed the new standard. Meanwhile, the Department of Labor (DOL) has twice postponed implementation of its rule updating standards for workers’ protection from carcinogenic beryllium dust. Like silica, exposure to beryllium, used in construction, shipyards, foundries and industries that use the metal to make electronics, aerospace, defense and other components, causes incurable lung disease and lung cancer.

“OSHA estimates that when fully implemented it [the rule] will save 94 lives a year. Every four days of delay in the implementation dates costs the life of one American worker,” wrote Michael Wright, director of health, safety and environment at United Steelworkers, in comments submitted to the DOL.

Republicans want the regulation delayed indefinitely and are calling it a “midnight” rule, implying the Obama administration rushed it through. In fact, the rule results from a process that began in 2002.

Also delayed are Environmental Protection Agency rules to prevent emissions of formaldehyde, a carcinogen and serious respiratory hazard, from manufactured wood products, to increase safety at industrial plants that use and store highly hazardous chemicals and to increase protections for pesticide applicators.

Tracking occupational illness

Trump has now signed two bills that will make it harder to track occupational illness. One undoes a rule requiring federal contractors to fully report all labor law violations. The other undoes a rule to strengthen employers’ workplace illness and injury recordkeeping requirements. Both were nullified with Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolutions that prevent an agency from ever issuing a comparable regulation. At an April 5 briefing for reporters, White House director of legislative affairs Marc Short called passage of these bills “a huge accomplishment. “

“Recordkeeping is so important because it allows OSHA to research what’s really putting workers at risk and to target the most serious hazards affecting workers,” says Emily Gardner, Public Citizen worker health and safety advocate. And, says Wilson, “Who’s bearing the disproportionate burden of exposure to substances like silica and asbestos gets submerged if we don’t know it’s...
Tens of thousands of workers have been trained across the US since the Susan Harwood program started. The bars represent numbers of people trained. The orange line indicates how much money was available for those activities. From https://www.osha.gov/dte/sharwood/images/sharwood_stats.png

happening.” Without this evidence, managing the problem becomes harder.

**Trump budget threatens health and safety training and enforcement**

The White House “budget blueprint” proposes eliminating OSHA’s Susan B. Harwood training grants. “The Harwood grants include very important training programs to reduce occupational illnesses, like grants that go out to train workers in nail salons and beauty parlors,” on exposure to hazardous chemicals, explained David Michaels, George Washington University professor of environmental and occupational health and Obama administration Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA.

These grants, which cost the federal government about $11 million annually, are probably the biggest source of worker “training about rights and procedures” on “preventing and reporting occupational illness,” said Craig Slatin, University of Massachusetts Lowell professor of health education and policy.

**Proposed DOL funding cuts** will also likely reduce OSHA’s already constrained enforcement budget. “OSHA is primarily an enforcement agency,” said Center for Progressive Reform executive director Matthew Shudtz. OSHA’s budget determines what the agency “can do to fight occupational illness,” he explained.

For example, OSHA funding will help determine what the agency can do to update its limited and outdated chemical safety standards, said Shudtz. These resources will also influence how OSHA uses what’s called the general duty clause. This sounds obscure but it’s key tool for the agency’s enforcement of workplace health and safety. It allows OSHA to enforce a general standard of safety “even when rules are outdated,” Shudtz explained. “This is really important in the illness context,” he said, particularly where specific safety standards are outdated or non-existent. The Obama administration pursued such cases but it seems unlikely that the Trump administration will do likewise.

So far, the Trump administration’s decisions impacting occupational health “are profoundly political, not scientific,” said Brody.

“How someone gets sick is always complicated,” she said. “And as long as there’s doubt and industry can pay for that doubt to be generated, we don’t move ahead on protecting workers.

Originally published in *In These Times*, at http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/20056/trumps_policies_are_already_making_workplaces_more_toxic.

Printed with permission from the author, including updating estimates of deaths from occupational diseases.
What is to be done?

Protecting workers’ lives and limbs: An agenda for action

We know about the tragedies of occupational diseases, injuries and illnesses related to work. The preceding pages make them all too clear.

At the same time, the current US administration is undermining many gains that help to prevent or reduce occupational and environmental health hazards and problems, and the ability of workers and communities to use hard-won rights.

Struggles are not new to us. Unions, workers’ centers, community coalitions and labor and health and safety advocates need to defend those rights. We also need to be clear about the real needs of people on the job, above and beyond what we have won so far in the United States.

Many of those groups -- 92 exactly -- came together to prepare and support the March, 2017 Protecting workers’ lives and limbs: An agenda for action. This way forward is the brainchild of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) Network.

The National COSH Network promotes safe and healthy working conditions for all working people, through education, training, organizing and advocacy. Member organizations (including those in the CNY Workers’ Memorial Week planning group) believe work-related injuries and illnesses are preventable and that workers have a right to take action to protect their health and safety without fear of retaliation.

The full framework can be found in English and Spanish at http://coshnetwork.org/node/382. Its introduction is summarized here with edited extracts from the 14-page document.

The national safety and health movement is committed to uncovering the facts of preventable tragedies related to work, and taking action to protect workers. We respect the dignity of all workers and we believe that all workplaces are safer and healthier when everyone has rights on the job, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual identity or immigration status.

The rates of workplace injury and death in the U.S. remain unacceptable. Government data shows that at least thirteen workers lose their lives each day from work-related injuries: almost 5,000 workers die on the job every year. Approximately 3 million workers each year suffer work-related injuries that cause them to miss work, modify their job tasks, or transfer to other jobs. These statistics do not include deaths from occupational diseases, which annually claim the lives of an estimated 95,000 workers.

These disturbing statistics underestimate the scope of the problem. The federal government counts work-related injuries and illnesses based on a survey
of employer reports. Many vulnerable worker groups -- including people of color, immigrant workers, young workers, and people struggling economically -- are at an especially high risk of work-related deaths, injuries, and illnesses. They often (justifiably) fear employer retaliation if they report their injuries and hazardous working conditions.

Under-reported or not, the cost of job-related hazards is expensive. According to the National Academy of Social Insurance, the direct cost to U.S. employers for workers’ compensation alone was $91.8 billion in 2014. The total cost to society for all work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses is two to three times greater. Workers, their families and communities bear the brunt of these costs.

The goals proposed in this Protecting workers’ lives & limbs agenda are common sense solutions to advance a vision we all share: ensure that all U.S. workers go to work in a safe and healthy job and can return to their home and families without injury or illness [emphasis added]. Making our workplaces healthy and safe and preventing work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths will:

→ let workers to stay on the job, earn a living, take care of their families, and contribute to their communities;
→ boost worker productivity and increase job retention;
→ reduce workers’ compensation and health care costs.

These goals are an integral part of a broader effort to ensure the health and well-being of all working people in the U.S. The broader agenda calls for supporting worker rights to join a union and/or worker center and bargain collectively; paid sick and family medical leave; a higher minimum wage indexed to inflation; pay equity across gender and race; and affordable, high-quality health care.

Workers, unions, concerned citizens, employers, public health professionals and elected officials can all play a role in advocating for a comprehensive agenda for action which will reduce injuries, illnesses and deaths in the workplace. There is no quick fix or easy solution; we expect it will require considerable time, energy and strategic organizing to implement many of the measures outlined above.

We must dedicate ourselves to carrying on this work in memory of workers who die or get ill or hurt because of their work, and in honor of the tremendous loss suffered by their families.

The Network is asking members and allies to take the platform to elected representatives. For each goal, there is a list of some things that federal and state legislators can do to meet the target.
Resources for health and safety and workers’ rights

These are some resources in the region that help workers deal with health and safety hazards and their general rights at work.

1. Government

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<td>The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (<a href="http://www.osha.gov">www.osha.gov</a>) enforces the health and safety law for most workers who do not work in the state's public sector. The Syracuse Area Office serves Central and Northern New York State.</td>
<td>3300 Vickery Road North Syracuse, NY 13212 (315) 451-0808 fax: (315) 451-1351</td>
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<td>The New York Public Employees Safety and Health (PESH) Bureau (<a href="https://www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/safetyhealth/DOSH_PESH.shtm">https://www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/safetyhealth/ DOSH_PESH.shtm</a>) enforces the health and safety law for public sector workers in New York state. The Syracuse District office serves Cayuga, Cortland, Jefferson, Onondaga, Oswego and Seneca counties.</td>
<td>450 South Salina St., Room 202 Syracuse, NY 13202 (315) 479-3319 fax: (315) 479-3451</td>
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<td>The federal National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) (<a href="http://www.nlrb.gov">www.nlrb.gov</a>) deals with retaliation, and “concerted action” by two or more people around health and safety and other working conditions (<a href="https://www.nlrb.gov/rights-we-protect/employee-rights">https://www.nlrb.gov/rights-we-protect/employee-rights</a>). Region 2 covers New York State.</td>
<td>26 Federal Plaza Room 3614 New York, NY 10278-0104 Phone: (212) 264-0300 Fax: (212) 264-2450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New York State’s Department of Labor has several offices that can help. The Anti-Retaliation Unit was set up in 2015 to “combat the exploitation and misclassification of workers by immediately engaging an employer who faces an allegation of retaliation”. The free number is 888-469-7365.


Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs (DIPA): covers farm workers too, rights explained at [https://www.labor.ny.gov/immigrants/know-your-rights.shtm](https://www.labor.ny.gov/immigrants/know-your-rights.shtm)
### 2. Advocates

#### Advocates for workers’ rights and health and safety

| Tompkins County Workers’ Center ([www.tcworkerscenter.org](http://www.tcworkerscenter.org)) in Ithaca advocates for respect at work, a living wage and the right to organize. It provides training and help with workers’ rights and health and safety issues. | 115 E. Martin Luther King Jr. St. / The Commons
Ithaca, NY 14850
Hotline: (607) 269-0409 |
<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unions represent many public sector workers, and some in the private sector. Contracts with employers can offer extra protection for workers. Most in the region belong to the Central New York Area Labor Federation (AFL-CIO)</td>
<td>Find your union rep in your workplace or through the ALF at (315) 422-3363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Workers’ Center of Central New York ([http://www.workerscentercny.org/](http://www.workerscentercny.org/)) is a grassroots organization focused upon workplace and economic justice. It provides training about workers’ rights, and health and safety in particular. Works in English and Spanish. | 2013 E. Genesee St.
Syracuse NY 13210
(315) 218-5708 |
| Worker Justice Center of New York ([http://www.wjcny.org/](http://www.wjcny.org/)) has three offices, including one in Rochester. The multi-cultural, multi-lingual organization provides legal services and other advocacy, focused on agricultural and other low wage workers. They provide training about workers’ rights, and health and safety. | 1187 Culver Road
Rochester, NY 14609
T: 585-325-3050
F: 585-325-7614
800-724-7020 |

#### Advocates for immigration and other issues

| Legal Services of Central New York ([http://www.lscny.org/](http://www.lscny.org/)) provides free legal services to low-income families and people; they do not deal with criminal law problems. | 221 South Warren Street
Suite 300
Syracuse, New York 13202
877-777-6152
Text to: 315-765-7121 |
|---|---|
| Onondaga County Volunteer Lawyers Project ([http://www.onvlp.org](http://www.onvlp.org)) is a non-profit legal aid organization helping low income people with civil law (not criminal) problems. | 221 South Warren Street
Suite 320
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315) 471-3409 |

#### Advocates and support for job-related injuries, illnesses and diseases

| Occupational Health Clinical Centers ([http://www.ohccupstate.org](http://www.ohccupstate.org)) provides medical evaluation, diagnosis, and support for workers’ compensation claims and other assistance for work-related problems. Staff also can help identify hazards, inspect workplaces, provide respiratory fit tests, and deliver information and training about a wide range of hazards. They also have workshops about workers’ health and safety rights. | 6712 Brooklawn Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13211
(315) 432-8899 |
### 3. Health and safety education/training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Syracuse COSH (<a href="http://www.gscosh.org">www.gscosh.org</a>)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gscosh.org">www.gscosh.org</a></td>
<td>Provides health and safety training. Topics include a variety of safety hazards, hazard communication, and OSHA 10 Construction Safety Training certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tompkins County Workers’ Center (<a href="http://www.tcworkerscenter.org">www.tcworkerscenter.org</a>)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tcworkerscenter.org">www.tcworkerscenter.org</a></td>
<td>Provides training in English and Spanish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are your rights to a healthy and safe job in New York State?

Federal and state laws give most New York State workers the right to a healthy and safe job. (Some farm workers don’t have these rights) They boil down to three categories:

1. Right to protection from hazards

Workers -- including temporary agency and contractor employees -- must be protected by:

- an employer whose workplace does not have “serious recognized hazards”;
- an employer who follows or does better than all the OSHA (or New York’s PESH) laws/regulations; and
- when needed, protective gear and equipment (e.g., respirators, safety shoes) that the employer provides and maintains.

2. Right to know

Workers have a right to information in four ways:

- to know about the hazards in your workplace (e.g., those that can cause cancer) -- and what is supposed to be done to protect you. For chemicals: training, labels, data sheets (the Hazard Communication Standard);
- to get records of tests (monitoring) done for hazards on your job(s), and your medical tests;
- access to information about illnesses and injuries at your workplace (Log 300s); and
- what citations your employer gets for breaking the law or regulations.

3. Right to act

Workers can take action about health and safety hazards and issues in several ways. You can:

- report injuries and hazards to your supervisor;
- file a complaint with OSHA about a hazard or retaliation;
- refuse to do something you think could put you in immediate danger; and
- do these things without discrimination (“whistleblower protection” under OSHA, “concerted action” in the National Labor Relations Act).

For more details about these rights, see the OSHA (and PESH) Safety and Health Protection on the Job poster. It must be displayed at all worksites.

(Graphics from the Hospital Employees Union’s Health and safety manual for stewards serving on joint health and safety committees, 2004)

Prepared January, 2017
We’re more than a medical clinic!

We want to prevent you and others getting sick or hurt because of work

Yes, our health care providers can
- diagnose job-related disease
- treat occupational illness
- advocate for workers’ compensation

Other staff also can work with you to:
- identify and fix hazards
- inspect workplaces
- do workshops about your rights at work, body and workplace maps, job-related violence, harassment/bullying, ergonomics, silica, standing hazards, indoor air problems, stress, and other hazards
- screen for asbestos, lead, hearing loss, etc.
- provide respirator fit tests

6712 Brooklawn Parkway, Syracuse 315-432-8899
840 Upper Front St., Binghamton 607-584-9990
39 W. Main St., Canton 315-714-2049
Treated Unfairly at Work?

"Can't you find something for Jenkins' right foot to do?"

- Unjust Termination
- Health and Safety
- Family Leave
- Health Insurance
- Immigration Issues
- Race Discrimination
- Sexual Orientation Discrimination
- Gender Discrimination
- Age Discrimination
- Workers Compensation
- Wages
- Harassment/Bullying
- Unemployment Insurance
- Problems with Welfare
- Housing Problems
- Other Work related Issues
- Referrals to Occupational Health Care Clinic Center for Injuries and Injury

607-269-0409
115 The Commons
(above Autumn Leaves Used Books)
TCWRH@tcworkerscenter.org
www.TCWorkersCenter.org
The Workers’ Center of Central New York (el Centro de Trabajadores de CNY) is a grassroots organization focused on workplace and economic justice.

Through community organizing, leadership development, popular education and policy advocacy, we aim to empower marginalized, low-wage workers to combat workplace abuses and improve wages and working conditions throughout the community.

Every day is Workers’ Memorial Day. “Mourn the dead and fight for the living”.

Cado día es Día de los Trabajadores Caídos. “Honremos a los Muertos y Luchemos por los Vivos”.

2013 E. Genesee St. Syracuse, NY 13210

Call us at/ Llamanos al 315-218-5708
or email us at /o envianos un email
wccny@workerscentercny.org

Office Hours:
Monday- Tuesday 12-5 pm
and by appointment

http://workerscentercny.org
Thanks to those who supported the publication of this booklet with ads. Please support them.
WE CARE FOR NEW YORK

The 400,000 healthcare workers of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East remember those who have suffered and died at work and renew the fight for safe jobs.

Unions and our allies have fought hard for protections that have made our jobs less dangerous, saved hundreds of thousands of lives, and prevented millions of workplace injuries and illnesses. But our work is not done.

Together, we will continue our shared fight!

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
QUALITY CARE AND GOOD JOBS FOR ALL

1199SEIU.org
The Central New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
Representing Over 100,000 Workers in Eleven CNY Counties

Broome-Tioga Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Cayuga Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Greater Syracuse Labor Council, AFL-CIO
MidState Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Oswego Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Tri-County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Celebrates
Workers Memorial Day

“Pray for the dead
and fight like hell for the living”
Mother Jones 1902.

Ann Marie Taliercio, President

www.cnylabor.org / (315) 422-3363
Syracuse area
2017 Workers’ Memorial Week
To remember workers killed, injured
and made sick by their job

IBEW
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Local Union # 43

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Patrick Costello...............President
Jonathan Leubner..........Vice-President
Richard Shopland....Recording Secretary
Eugene Townsend...............Treasurer

Executive Board
Alan Marzullo, Chairman • Jeffrey Cassano • Kevin Crawford
Richard Godden • Patrick Harrington • Timothy Lazore • Jeremy Wentworth

4568 Waterhouse Rd. • Clay, NY 13041 • 315-422-0435 • www.ibew43.org
The Officers and Members of Iron Workers Local 60

are proud to recognize those dedicated workers from around the world that have been killed, injured and made sick by their jobs.

The Officers and Members of Iron Works Local 60

Gary Robb, Business Manager
LiUNA! LABORERS LOCAL # 633

ONONDAGA
BUILD AMERICA
Feel the Power

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Arthur Thurlow
John Walker
Trustee
Trustee

Jake Ladd
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LABORERS633.ORG
Teacher representatives from all nine component school districts throughout Oswego County working to improve student achievement and workplace conditions for all students, teachers, teaching assistants and nurses throughout Oswego County.

We fully support healthy and safe jobs for all!!
WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 2017
SAFE JOBS—SAVE LIVES

“Mourn for the dead, but fight like hell for the living”
Historic Labor Organizer, Mother Jones

ROOFERS LOCAL #195
75 YEARS UNION PROUD, UNION STRONG
1940—2015

RONALD HANEY
BUSINESS MANAGER

KEVIN MILLIGAN
PRESIDENT

THE OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND STAFF

6200 STATE RT 31, CICERO, NY 13039 *** PH (315) 699-1808 *** FAX (315) 699-1806
E-MAIL - local195@twcny.rr.com *** www.rooferslocal195.com
In Tribute to Workers Memorial Day

“Let Us Never Forget”

On behalf of our Upstate New York Sub-District Office and its Affiliated Local Unions and Membership

“Committed to Protecting Workers’ Rights!”

James J. Valenti, Sub-District Director
Ed Moran, Health & Safety Training Coordinator
Jim Ridgeway, Staff Representative
Cary Eldridge, Staff Representative
Rick Sauer, Staff Representative
Jack VanderBaan, Staff Representative
Heather Q. Claver, Admin Assistant
Fulton Teachers Association

supports healthy and safe work environments!

East Syracuse Minoa Teachers, TAs & SRPs
stand together to support safe jobs for all!
Thank you for your continued work on Workers’ Safety for
Workers’ Memorial Day 2017

District Council #4
Painters Local Union #31

615 West Genesee Street Syracuse, NY 13204
Phone: 315-471-5874     Fax: 315-471-1027

Executive Board
Wendy Colucci - President
Joe Voltra Sr. - Vice President
Kenneth Cooper Sr. - Financial Secretary
Tony Ruckensteiner - Recording Secretary
Dale Cherrier - Treasurer

Gary Cocker - Trustee       Joe Hanreck - Trustee
Joe Votra Jr. - Trustee     Jennifer Nelson - Warden

NOT ONE MORE!

As advocates for all workers, we in the Labor Movement
dedicate ourselves to this principle – we cannot stand to
lose one more worker to death, illness or injury because
of the work they do.

When our workplaces are safe and healthy, workers
thrive. CSEA, our staff professionals in our
Occupational Safety and Health Department, and our
activist leadership are committed to ensuring every
workplace is one where workers are healthy and safe.

As we commemorate Workers Memorial Day 2017 and
mourn those we’ve lost, we rededicate ourselves to fighting
like hell for the living. We will never rest in our fight for safer,
healthier workplaces.

CSEA, Danny Donohue, President • www.cseany.org
The NYSUT CNY Region remembers and honors workers killed, injured, or made ill because of their jobs, and recognizes the CNYOHCC and all of the award winners for their health and safety activism and advocacy.
ArtRage
(The Norman Putter Gallery)
505 Hawley Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13203
(315) 218-5711

Gallery viewing hours
(during exhibits)
Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 2-7pm
Saturday 12-4pm
Group tours can be arranged

LOCAL 1123
50 Presidential Plaza
Suite 104
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315) 476-1123
www.local1123.com
GROWING & KEEPING
GOOD JOBS IN NEW YORK STATE

We celebrate Workers Memorial Week 2017 as we honor those who have lost their lives and express gratitude to those who continue to fight for safe workplaces.

WDI is a statewide organization that collaborates with businesses, unions and community organizations to fund and facilitate programs that develop, support and enrich the workforce of New York State.

For more information about WDI’s programs contact, David Goodness at dgoodness@wdiny.org or go to www.wdiny.org
Working for a Better Workplace Since 1933

Representing the Interests of Labor Organizations and Employees throughout New York State

- Collective Bargaining Negotiations
- Arbitration and Administrative Hearings
- Employment Discrimination Counseling and Litigation
- Pension and Employee Benefit Plans

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Client Toll-Free 1.800.724.3190  www.bklawyers.com
Oot & Associates, PLLC
Attorneys and Counselors at Law

are proud to support

Workers’ Memorial Week

In memory of those who have lost life and limb in the workplace.

Over 100 years of combined experience in representing:

Workers’ Compensation
Social Security Disability
Personal Injury/Negligence

Dedicated to protecting rights of injured workers for decades.

Two offices to serve you best:

503 E. Washington St. • Syracuse, NY • 315.471.6687

63 Main St. • Canton, NY • 315.379.1466

www.OotAndAssociates.com
Join us in Clinton Square, Syracuse on April 28, 2017 12 - 1 for Workers’ Memorial Day

Information for the day and other events
Going to work shouldn’t be a grave mistake

We remember Carlos Moncayo and other New York State workers who were killed, injured or got sick because their employers ignored the health and safety laws.

We want the NYS government to:

- prosecute employers who ignore health and safety laws and allow people working for them to die, get hurt or become ill
- raise the state’s minimum penalty to at least $1 million for corporate (in)action that leads to workers’ deaths/injuries/illnesses/diseases, and increase the felony class from C to E

We mourn the dead and fight like hell for the living!

Workers’ Memorial Day
April 28, 2017
at Clinton Square, Syracuse -- 12pm - 1pm
(In case of rain: 1199SEIU, 250 S. Clinton St. 1st floor conference room)

We will gather to name and remember the 40-some workers who died in the region in the last year, just because they went to work. We will remember the many others who died anonymously of occupational diseases. We will stand in solidarity to fight for healthy and safe workplaces.

Sponsored by:
1199SEIU, the Central New York Area Labor Federation (AFL-CIO), Greater Syracuse Council on Occupational Safety and Health, the Occupational Health Clinical Center, the Workers’ Center of Central New York, and others

For information:
Dorothy Wigmore (OHCC):
wigmored@upstate.edu; 315-432-8899 x 127
Nikeeta Slade (WC CNY):
nslade@workerscentercny.org; 315-218-5708
Workers’ Memorial Week 2017 and related events

ArtRage Gallery (505 Hawley St., Syracuse; artragegallery.org; 315-218-5711 -- call about opening hours)

April 8 - May 20: At all costs: Photographs of American workers by Earl Dotter

Earl Dotter has been taking pictures of American workers on the job for more than 40 years. Honors along the way include having his coal mining series become part of the National Portrait Gallery’s permanent collection. Most of the black and white and color ones in this exhibit come from the collection held by the Occupational Health Clinical Centers, based in Syracuse.

April 19: Invisible suffering: The reality of women’s health and safety on the job - 7 pm

A presentation by Dr. Karen Messing of the Université du Québec à Montréal. Her latest book is Pain and prejudice: What science can learn about work from the people who do it.

April 26: 10,000 black men named George (film screening and discussion) - 7 pm

Directed by Robert Townsend, Written by Cyrus Nowrasteh; Discussion facilitated by Mark Mohammed. Andre Braugher stars as legendary African-American labor organizer Asa Philip Randolph. The story begins in the 1920s, when being a railway Pullman-car porter was one of the few jobs open to black men. It took 12 years for Randolph and others to organize a union despite brutal strike-breaking tactics the company used.

May 1: Artist’s talk with Earl Dotter - 7 pm

Earl Dotter has photographed workers in many jobs. His photography consistently gets life and texture by shooting not just the work, but the whole worker and his or her life on the job, at home, and in the community. Over the years, his subjects have expanded from an emphasis on occupational health and safety to include environmental hazards to public health.

May 10: Food chains (film screening and discussion) - 7 pm

Food Chains reveals the human cost in our food supply and the complicity of large buyers of produce like fast food and supermarkets. The narrative focuses on an intrepid and highly-lauded group of tomato pickers from Southern Florida – the Coalition of Immokalee Workers or CIW – who are revolutionizing farm labor.

Workers’ Memorial Day (April 28) event
(Clinton Square, Syracuse: 12 - 1 pm)

Join the Occupational Health Clinical Centers, the Workers’ Center of Central New York, the Central New York Area Labor Federation (AFL-CIO), 1199SEIU, and other unions, organizations and individuals at noon in the Square. We will name those who’ve died in the region in the last year because of work, and commit ourselves -- again -- to fighting for the living.
We just come to work here. We don’t come to die

Songwriter: Harry “OR” Stamper
Updated lyrics & Music by Anne Feeney (From: Union Maid, 2005)

Working at this job is dirty and dangerous
And I’m taking risks anyway.
Oh, if I had the time and the proper equipment, I could do my job safely each day.
Everybody here says they’re sticklers for safety, - and I’m not here to say that they lie;
I’m saying we just come to work here – We don’t come to die.

Now I don’t want your chemicals clouding my brain, I want to keep all of my fingers and toes.
I want to hear those cheers with both of my ears,
When my working days come to a close.
Work that I do here is dangerous enough
Don’t you rush me and I’m telling you why
"We just come to work here – We don’t come to die."

Now, while you’re up there talking in an air-conditioned office
On a telephone that’s OSHA-approved,
Go on and tell me how much you’ve been spending on safety,
-Pardon me – I’m not moved.

There’s only one way to put an end to the slaughter, just look your boss right in the eye,
Tell him « We just come to work here – We don’t come to die,
We just come to work here – We don’t come to die »

Back story: "Oregon" longshoreman Harry Stamper wrote this song after his boss asked him to put his life at risk one day on the docks. "Why don’t you get in there?" shouted Harry's boss. "Why don’t you just lay down in the driveway and lick your balls?" replied Harry. Thanks to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Harry was able to appeal his firing and get his job back. It was determined that Harry would have been killed if he had listened to his boss.

Source:

At all costs: Workers’ Memorial Week, 2017
Mourn for the dead
Fight like hell for the living

That’s the long-time theme for Workers’ Memorial Day and the Week around it.

The international theme for 2017 is:
Unsafe and unfair - discrimination on the job hurts us all

Workers’ Memorial Week events in the Syracuse area were planned with these themes in mind by:

- Anne Marie Gibson, NY Department of Health
- Dave Philippone, Ooot & Associates
- Dorothy Wigmore, Occupational Health Clinical Center, Syracuse
- Debra Gonzales, Greater Syracuse COSH
- Julie Gozan
- Kim McCormick, ArtRage
- MaryAnn McCormick, Greater Syracuse COSH
- Nikeeta Slade, Workers’ Center of Central New York
- Pat Greenburg, 1199SEIU
- Rebecca Fuentes, Workers’ Center of Central New York
- Rose Vivano, ArtRage
- Wendy Colucci, Central New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

Special thanks to Debra Gonzales for the art work on the cover