

President's 2009 Workers' Memorial Day Message

On April 28, workers and their unions throughout the world will pause to remember the thousands of workers killed and injured in the workplace over the past year. I ask each of you to take time this Workers' Memorial Day to remember and honor our fallen Brothers and Sisters.

Each year in the U.S., approximately 6,000 workers are killed at work, 50,000 die from occupational illnesses, and millions more are injured. During calendar year 2008, 25 U.S. railroad workers were killed on duty, including 8 fatalities in maintenance of way and structures. Another 4,736 rail workers suffered reportable injuries, including 1,261 employed in maintenance of way and structures. These railroad employee fatalities and injuries do not include an undetermined number of rail employees who suffer or have succumbed to railroad-related occupational illnesses and disease during 2008.

A recent study published by the AFL-CIO reveals that, on average, 15 American workers are killed on the job *each day* and approximately 11,000 more injured or made ill daily. Unfortunately, these tragic statistics do not tell the full story. Studies have also shown that underreporting or non-reporting of injuries and illnesses is rampant with as many as two out of three workplace injuries not ever recorded.

We will honor the victims of workplace death and injury by holding employers accountable for the protection of workers' safety and health. We call for action on meaningful job safety protection laws and demand aggressive enforcement of existing laws. We affirm that nothing is more important than assuring a workplace free of hazards so that our members can return home from work in the same condition as when they left.

Please join me in honoring our dead by pausing to remember their ultimate sacrifice this Workers' Memorial Day. Then, let us redouble our efforts to eliminate death and injury in the workplace. In the words of labor pioneer Mother Jones, "Mourn for the dead, and fight like hell for the living."

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