

Workers Memorial Day

Each April 28, since 1989, the unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day as a day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job. As we remember those who have died in workplace catastrophes, suffered diseases because of exposure to toxic substances or been injured because of dangerous conditions, we rededicate ourselves to the fight for safe workplaces. As such, the core theme for Workers Memorial Day has been “Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living.”

April 28 was chosen because it is the anniversary of when the Occupational Safety and Health Act went into effect and the day of similar remembrance in Canada that began in 1984. In Canada, the day is called the Workers’ Day of Mourning and was officially recognized by the government in 1991. Every year, people in hundreds of communities and at worksites recognize workers who have been killed or injured on the job. Trade unionists around the world now mark April 28 as an International Day of Mourning.

Workers Memorial Day is observed in nearly one hundred countries. April 28 has been recognized as international commemoration day for dead and injured workers since 1996, when at the United Nations in New York, a Global Union delegation lit a commemoration candle to highlight the plight of workers who die, are injured or become ill. It has been officially endorsed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Eleven countries or territories formally recognize April 28 as a national observance day: Argentina, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain and Taiwan. Information on International Workers Memorial Day events can be found at www.hazards.org/wmd/index.htm.

Over the years, numerous communities have dedicated plaques, sites and monuments to workers who have lost their lives because of dangerous working conditions. A list of such monuments, can be viewed on the AFL-CIO website at www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/memorial/wmd_mem.cfm.

Mourn for the Dead Fight for the Living

For more information, contact the AFL-CIO Safety and Health Office
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