



American Public Health Association

National COSH
National Council for Occupational Safety and Health
133 Circadian Way
Chapel Hill NC 27516
coshnatl@gmail.com

American Public Health Association
800 I St. NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 777-APHA

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NATIONAL WORKER SAFETY ADVOCATES URGE QUICK ACTION BY OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

SEVEN PRIORITIES TARGETED TO HALT WORKER DEATHS AND INJURIES

The National Council on Occupational Safety and Health and the Occupational Health and Safety Section of the American Public Health Association released today *Protecting Workers on the Job: Seven Priorities for Federal action in 2009*, a platform of recommendations aimed at reversing the erosion of the worker safety protections that has put the nation's workers at a heightened risk of injury, illness and death. The platform includes proposals to improve worker safety and health in areas of education, legislation and stronger enforcement of health and safety regulations. The full platform can be found at <http://www.coshnetwork.org/node/145>.

"Over the past eight years, federal job safety agencies have failed to fulfill their promise to protect workers' health and safety on the job. Workers continue to be killed and injured on the job at appallingly high rates, yet federal OSHA refuses to issue new protective standards or adequately enforce existing safety and health rules," said Tolle Graham, president of the National COSH. "Acts of gross negligence or criminal behavior leading to workplace deaths result in minor fines. And millions of public safety employees--the very workers that protect us all from natural or deliberate disasters--are outside the jurisdiction of federal OSHA entirely."

The platform released today is centered on correcting these failures of the Occupational Safety and Health Act by expanding workers' rights to a safe and healthy workplace and increasing the effectiveness of OSHA enforcement. Highlights of the platform include:

- **Increase Worker Rights to safety and health protections:** All workers should be covered by comprehensive, worksite-specific injury and illness prevention programs
- **Extend OSHA Coverage to all Employees and Address Unregulated Hazards**
- **Strengthen OSHA's Penalty Structure to Ensure Effective Deterrence**

"No one knows and feels the consequences of these problems more than the victims and their loved ones. We need to act now to save others from the pain and suffering these preventable tragedies bring", said Tammy Miser of United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities [USMWF.] Ms. Miser's brother was killed by a dust explosion at a Hays Lemmerz aluminum wheel plant in Indiana.

The platform recognizes the intrinsic link between work and family life and the dear price that families pay when workers become injured or lose their lives. "We're very encouraged to know that the Vice President will be leading a taskforce examining this very issue, and we'd welcome participating in that process, said Dr. Celeste Monforton

of George Washington University School of Public Health and Chair of the Occupational Health and Safety Section of the American Public Health Association.

ABOUT THE National COSH and The American Public Health Association [APHA]:

The National Council for Occupational Safety and Health is a federation of 21 local and statewide "COSH" groups--Committees/Coalitions on Occupational Safety and Health (www.coshnetwork.org). APHA is the largest and most diverse public health organization in the world (www.apha.org). United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities (USMWF) is the only US organization dedicated to families who have had a loss in the workplace (www.usmwf.org).

Key Facts about Workplace Safety and Health:

- *Nearly 16 workers in the United States die each day from injuries sustained at work and 134 die from work-related diseases.*
- *An estimated 11,500 private-sector workers suffer a nonfatal work-related injury or illness each day in the U.S.*
- *Approximately 9,000 workers are treated in emergency departments each day because of occupational injuries and approximately 200 are hospitalized.*

Contacts:

Debra McFadden – Assistant Director, NJ Work Environment Council – 609-695-7100, Ext. 306

Tolle Graham – Chair, National COSH - 617-642-1878.

Tom O'Connor, Coordinator, National COSH – 919 933-6322

Celeste Monforton, MPH, DrPH – Chair, APHA OHS Section – 202-994-0774

Tammy Miser – Executive Director, USMWF – 859-338-9144

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