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Family of Boston trench collapse victims push for state legislation

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BOSTON —

It has been one year and two days since a trench collapse in Boston killed two construction workers. The city has passed legislation to improve safety standards, but a new bill in the State House is trying to strengthen laws across Massachusetts.

Kelvin Mattocks and Robert Higgins died last October when a trench they were working on in the South End collapsed and filled with water. On Monday, both of their families joined Rep. Bryon Rushing in pushing for legislation to promote workers safety.

“Please help us not let this happen to any other family,” said Joyce Biancuzzo, the mother of Higgins.

Rushing’s bill would require companies bidding for state contracts reveal their OSHA violations for the last four years. Rushing said his bill would make construction work safer in the state and is similar to one passed in December by the Boston City Council.

“These were not accidents. They were deaths that could have been prevented. ” Rushing said. “This will definitely save lives and it will also ensure the workers that they are in a safe environment.”

Back in April, OSHA cited Atlantic Drain Service Co. for 18 violations and said the deaths of Higgins and Mattocks could have and should have been prevented.

While it is too late for both of those men, their families hope the passage of the bill will prevent future tragedies.

“We’re going to have to live with this for the rest of our lives and I hope no one else has to,” said Jerry Biancuzzo, the father of Higgins. “This law is a beginning of that, but only a beginning and I hope it just keeps on going.”

The bill is scheduled for a hearing in November. Rushing hopes it will be passed by early next year



Advocates rally on Beacon Hill in support for workers safety bill

The bill is being review by the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development

By Elisha Machado Published: October 23, 2017, 5:07 pm Updated: October 23, 2017, 5:22 pm

<http://wwlp.com/2017/10/23/advocates-rally-on-beacon-hill-in-support-for-workers-safety-bill/>

BOSTON (WWLP) – Robert Higgins and Kelvin Mattocks were killed on the job last year when a pipe burst in a trench they were digging in Boston. Now, workers are pushing for the state to take legislative action to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening in the future.

Seventy workers were killed on the job in 2016, including two Boston laborers that dozens of activists and residents gathered together to remember at the State House Monday with the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety.

“They were working in an unprotected trench that their employer knew needed safety precautions and he did not require his employees to use them,” MassCOSH Communications Coordinator Jeff Newton explained. “Unfortunately, it cost these two men their lives.”

Workers advocates are calling on lawmakers to support legislation that would require contractors to disclose violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970 when bidding for state contracts.

The bill is currently up for review by the state’s Committee on Labor and Workforce Development.



<http://whdh.com/news/officials-call-for-more-safety-regulations-1-year-after-deadly-trench-collapse/>

BOSTON (WHDH) — The Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety said they are pushing for safer working environments during a memorial for two workers who died on the job one year ago.

The two men died last October while working in a trench in Boston's South End. A pipe burst, flooding the trench with water and drowning the two workers. Family members said their deaths were preventable.

"He lost his life doing what he did best, doing an honest day of work," said Melinda Mattock-Ushry, sister of one of the victims. "That's what hurt us the most, it could've been prevented."

Officials are calling for legislation that could require contractors to share their safety records and violations when bidding for state funds.

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

VIOLATION DISCLOSURE COULD SAVE WORKERS' LIVES, BILL BACKERS TESTIFY

By Colin A. Young

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, OCT. 23, 2017.....A year and two days after Kelvin Mattocks and Robert Higgins died working in a trench on Dartmouth Street in Boston, their families came to the State House to call on lawmakers to take action to protect other workers in the state.

"That was the worst day of our lives. This has been the worst year of our lives. It could have been prevented," Melinda Mattocks-Ushry, Kelvin Mattocks' sister, said. "We stand here today honoring him and Mr. Higgins because they went out to do an honest day of work to take care of their families and they didn't come home."

The company for which Mattocks and Higgins worked, Atlantic Drain Service, had a lengthy history of willful health and safety violations, according to the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety (MassCOSH), including citations for conditions that could lead to trench cave-ins. Such a cave-in factored in the workers' deaths after a water main burst.

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