

Safety advocates mourn fallen workers, push for reforms in Bay State

By [Gerry Tuoti](#)
Wicked Local Newsbank Editor

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BOSTON – Mourners crowded in front of the Statehouse steps Thursday to push for workplace safety reforms and remember the 63 workers – including men from Wayland, Hudson and Bellingham - killed on the job in Massachusetts last year.

“Today is a solemn reminder that we have to push even harder,” said Rich Rogers, executive secretary-treasurer of the Greater Boston Labor Council.

After volunteers took turns reciting the names of workers who died on the job, mourners gently placed red carnations in front of a temporary memorial wall while a bagpiper played “Amazing Grace.”

The names and pictures on the wall belonged to departed workers who plied their trades in dozens of occupations across many industries.

“What they had in common was more important, that their deaths were not freak accidents, that they were not because of human error, that they were not their fault, that they were caused by job hazards that are predictable, that are known and that there are proven strategies for preventing, and that employers and contractors did not do that,” said Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Occupational Safety and Health, the nonprofit organization that organized Thursday’s ceremony.

Fatal injuries in construction accounted for 18 Massachusetts deaths in 2015, more than any other industry, according to a report MassCOSH released Thursday.

Transportation-related accidents were the most common cause of death, contributing to fatal injuries in 23 worker deaths across all industries. Falls, slips and trips caused 18 fatal injuries, and violence was behind six workplace deaths.

Against the backdrop of the Statehouse, Don Dumont described the pain his family has endured since his son Nick died in a Taunton construction accident last September.

“I’m devastated that he’s no longer here,” the father said. “I won’t be able to see him get married, have kids or just be with us. We’ll never feel that again.”

Nick Dumont, a Pawtucket, R.I., resident and an Iraq War veteran, had turned 24 shortly before his death.

While initial reports indicated human error contributed to the accident, Dumont and his attorney said subsequent investigations have revealed that wasn’t the case. Nick Dumont, they said, exercised all appropriate safety precautions while working at the Taunton construction site when a crane violated safety protocols and swung into the steel beam he was harnessed to.

“We cannot take the word of big business for how these incidents occur,” attorney Doug Sheff told the crowd. “We have to question, we have to investigate and we have to litigate.”

David White discussed the loss of his son, Ricardo Oliveira of Woonsocket, R.I., who fell to his death at a Sutton construction site in January.

“He leaves behind a grieving mom, a dad, brothers, a sister,” White said. “Not only was he a good boy, he was an all around good guy. If you needed help, he was the first person people turned to for help.”

According to MassCOSH, eight Massachusetts firefighters died last year, including those who were killed by cancers and other illnesses related to work conditions.

Workers Memorial Day organizers called for more funding for the state Department of Labor Standards, an extension of federal occupational safety protections to all public employees in Massachusetts, wage theft prevention reforms and increased access to workers’ compensation benefits.

Rogers said it’s important to shed light on unsafe working conditions.

“My fondest hope is one of these years, I’ll come back here and I won’t have any names to read,” he said.

Among the workers killed in Massachusetts in 2015

* WAYNE PARMENTER - 52

Auto body foreman, Wayland, 03/08/2015

* ROBERT MAJOR - 45

Office cafeteria manager, Wellesley, 03/14/2015

* LENORE TRAVIS - 67

Farmer, Lincoln, 04/26/2015

* NICHOLAS PENZA - 18

pizza delivery driver, Bellingham, 2/5/16

U.S. Troops from Massachusetts

* JOHN M. DAWSON - 28

U.S. Army Spc., Whitinsville, 04/08/2015

SOURCE: MassCOSH



Massachusetts labor unions pushing for safer working conditions

22News was at the State House as they honored people who've died while working

BOSTON (WWLP) – 63 Massachusetts workers died on the job in 2015, according to the [Massachusetts AFL-CIO](#). The numbers go up to 630 when you factor in deaths caused by work-related injuries and illnesses.

Dozens of people gathered on the State House steps Thursday to honor those who died while working last year. The [Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health](#) released a report, outlining ways to create a safer work environment.

The coalition is urging the Governor to increase workers' compensation benefits for those who died while working. They're also calling on state lawmakers to hold companies accountable for all of their employees, including temporary workers.

Melissa King, whose father died on the job, told 22News, "When you look at the average fine that OSHA puts out when somebody passes away, it's less than \$10,000. So, why implement safety features when there's really no consequence except to the families that are left behind?"

Construction and transportation jobs were the leading cause of work-related deaths in Massachusetts.



Workers' Memorial Day 2016 ceremonies planned in Boston, Northampton, Springfield

Massachusetts labor and civic leaders will pause this week at [Workers' Memorial Day](#) ceremonies around the commonwealth to honor those who died on the job and to dedicate themselves to preventing such tragedies in the future.

A Northampton ceremony is scheduled for Thursday at noon at Northampton City Hall, 210 Main St., according to the Western Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health. The ceremony will include a parade to the nearby Hampshire County Hall of Records. Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz is expected to attend.

In Springfield, the ceremony will take place Friday at 1 p.m. at the Local 404 Teamsters Hall, 115 Progress Ave. Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno is expected to attend. Officials will read the names of all the workers who have died since the most recent ceremony. They include members of the armed forces from Massachusetts who died in the last year, no matter where their deaths occurred.

A ceremony in Boston is set for noon Thursday at the State House, 24 Beacon St. It's sponsored by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH), Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and Greater Boston Labor Council.

Labor leaders hold Workers' Memorial Day ceremonies each year in late April to commemorate the rough anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. The bill, signed into

law the following December by President Richard Nixon, created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

There were 63 workplace fatalities in 2015, which works out to 1.9 per 100,000 workers, an increase from 49 fatalities – 1.5 per 100,000 – in 2014, according to the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health.

There were 11 workplace deaths in the first three months of 2016.

Other facts from MassCOSH:

- **Transportation** incidents were the leading cause of fatal injuries, contributing to the deaths of 23 workers.
- **Six workers** were murdered on the job in 2015, with occupations ranging from doctor to sous chef.
- **The average fine** assessed to an employer with OSHA violations resulting in the death of a worker was \$18,513.

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63 workers died on the job in Mass. in 2015

BOSTON — A new report says more than 60 Massachusetts workers died on the job in 2015 — a number that soars when deaths by occupational injuries and illnesses are included.

The report released Wednesday by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO found that 63 Massachusetts workers lost their lives while at work last year.

That number climbs to 630 when deaths caused by occupational injuries and job-related illnesses are included.

Transportation incidents were the leading cause of fatal injuries, contributing to the deaths of 23 workers.

Six workers were murdered on the job in 2015, with occupations ranging from doctor to sous chef.

The average fine assessed to an employer with safety violations resulting in the death of a worker was \$18,513.

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