



# American Society of Safety Engineers

*Florida Suncoast Chapter*

*Protecting people, property and the environment.*

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Estero, Florida** – In 1989, April 28<sup>th</sup> was designated Workers Memorial Day to direct attention to workers who have been killed or injured on the job. This day was chosen because it is the anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). The first Worker Memorial Day was observed in Canada also on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Today, labor unions, employers, community groups and others around the world now mark April 28<sup>th</sup> as an International Day of Mourning.

The goal of Worker Memorial Day is to remember those who have suffered and died on the job. As we remember those who have died in workplace catastrophes, suffered diseases due to exposure to toxic substances or been injured because of dangerous conditions, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the need to revitalize our commitment to improving health and safety in the workplace.

For this reason, the day has special significance to those who are dedicated to addressing occupational health and safety issues. Despite the difficulties and challenges we face in achieving the goal of reducing and eliminating workplace hazards, we must remain ever vigilant. Since the passage of OSHA, the job fatality rate has been cut by 60 percent and more than 306,706 lives have been saved.

However, too many workers remain at risk. In 2006, more than 4.2 million workers were injured and 5,703 were killed as a result of job hazards. Another 50,000 died due to occupational disease. While this year's number of fatalities represents a slight decline from the preceding year, fatal work injuries among Hispanic workers increased from 917 in 2005 to 937 in 2006. This is the highest number of fatalities among Hispanics yet recorded by the census. In addition, coal mining industry fatalities more than doubled in 2006, due to the Sago Mine disaster and other multiple-fatality coal mining incidents.

That is why workers, employers, unions, community leaders, city councils, state legislative representatives and others commemorate and publicize this important day. Past efforts have demonstrated that worker safety and health is directly linked to the existence and effectiveness of a safety and health program in a workplace. Please join us this year in reflecting on the successes we've had in addressing workplace hazards as well as challenges that we face ahead.

Some of the events that have been sponsored in the past include: a moment of silence at the workplace, the distribution of black ribbon pins, a tree planting ceremony or simply distributing educational information like this one to raise awareness about the importance of workplace safety and health.