



OSHA

The statutory mandates that apply to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration ensure workers have safe workplaces. The secretary of Labor has the responsibility for assuring compliance. The following is a list of frequently asked questions.

Q: Am I covered by OSHA?

A: Federal workers are covered by their agencies. By presidential executive order, federal agencies must maintain an effective safety and health program that meets the same standard as private employers. But federal agencies cannot be fined for violating health and safety standards, except for the U.S. Postal Service, which now falls directly under OSHA's jurisdiction and is treated as a private employer.

Q: What are my rights under OSHA?

A: The Occupational Safety and Health Act grants workers important rights. Workers have a vital role to play in identifying and correcting problems in their workplaces, working with their employers whenever possible. Often, employers will promptly correct hazardous conditions called to their attention. But workers also can complain to OSHA about workplace conditions threatening their health or safety. They can file complaints in person, by telephone, by fax, by mail or through OSHA's website.

Q: What are employers' responsibilities?

A: The OSH Act requires employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace free of recognized hazards and to follow OSHA standards. Employers' responsibilities also include providing training, medical examinations and record keeping.

Q: What is an OSHA standard?

A: OSHA issues standards or rules to protect workers against many hazards on the job. These standards limit the amount of hazardous chemicals workers can be exposed to, require the use of certain safety practices and equipment, and require employers to monitor hazards and maintain records of workplace injuries and illnesses. Employers can be cited and fined if they do not comply with OSHA standards. It is also possible for an employer to be cited under OSHA's general duty clause, which

requires employers to keep their workplaces free of serious recognized hazards. This clause is generally cited when no specific OSHA standard applies to the hazard.

Q: What can I do if I think my workplace is unsafe?

A: You may file a complaint with OSHA concerning a hazardous working condition at any time. You should not, however, leave the worksite merely because you have filed a complaint. If the condition clearly presents a risk of death or serious physical harm, there is not sufficient time for OSHA to inspect, and, where possible, you have brought the condition to the attention of your employer, you may have a legal right to refuse to work in a situation in which you would be exposed to the hazard. You may file a complaint with OSHA if you believe there may be a violation of an OSHA standard or a serious safety or health hazard at work. You may request that your name not be revealed to your employer. You can file a complaint through OSHA's website, in writing or by telephone to the nearest OSHA office. You may also call the office and speak with an OSHA compliance officer about a hazard, violation or the process for filing a complaint.

The first Workers Memorial Day was observed in 1989. April 28 was chosen because it is the anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the day of a similar day of remembrance in Canada. 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.

Decades of struggle by workers and their unions have resulted in significant improvements in working conditions. But the toll of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths remains enormous. Each year, thousands of workers are killed and millions more are injured or diseased because of their jobs. The unions of the AFL-CIO remember these workers on April 28, Workers Memorial Day.

Now is the time to be thinking if your branch will be interested in participating. Any branches interested in obtaining Workers Memorial Day informational packets can call NALC Headquarters after April 1 to request the materials or you can go to the AFL-CIO website for more information. ☒