

Statement of US Labor Secretary Perez about Workers' Memorial Day

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News Statement

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez today issued the following statement on Workers' Memorial Day:

“Each year, Workers' Memorial Day gives us an opportunity to remember those who have lost their lives in the course of a day's work, and to recommit to keeping workers safe on the job. In 2015, as we mark the five-year anniversaries of three tragedies – the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, in which 11 workers lost their lives, the Upper Big Branch mine disaster which took the lives of 29 miners, and the Tesoro refinery explosion which killed seven workers – we are reminded that while we have made great strides in worker safety, we must do more.

In 2013, 4,585 workers were killed on the job. That number has fallen dramatically since the Occupational Safety and Health Act passed in 1970, but it's still 4,585 too many. It's 4,585 too many men and women who lost their lives trying to earn a paycheck. It's 4,585 too many workers – mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, sisters and brothers – who went to work but never came home.

Every worker has a right to a safe and healthy workplace – and a right to speak up when they believe something is unsafe. Every employer has a responsibility to ensure the safety of their workers, and forward-looking businesses know that compromising the safety of workers to improve the bottom line is a false choice.

As we mourn the lives lost on the job, we must make sure workers know their rights and employers know their responsibilities. In doing so, we can prevent tragic loss and ensure every worker goes home safely at the end of every workday.”

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