

## **What is International Workers Memorial Day?**

IWMD takes place all over the world on 28 April each year. The purpose of IWMD is two-fold. Firstly, it is about not forgetting those who have died, been injured, or been made ill by their work. Secondly, it is about ensuring that this tragic loss and suffering is used to reinvigorate the campaign for healthier and safer work. The campaign slogan is *Remember the Dead, Fight for the Living*.

## **Why should we commemorate Workers Memorial Day?**

Society no-longer finds domestic violence or drink-driving acceptable. People don't complain about a nanny state because the law requires the fitting and wearing of seat belts in cars. The same is not true of work-related injury, ill-health, and death.

UNISON is working to ensure that work-related harm is not just seen as a tragic but accepted part of the world of work. Behind every statistic there is a tragedy affecting the victims, their families, friends, and colleagues.

Work "accidents" cause up to 1,600 deaths every year. These include work-related suicide, road accidents while driving for work, and members of the public killed by someone else's work. When you add in as many as 50,000 deaths from work-related illnesses (including cancers, respiratory illnesses, and heart disease) these numbers are way too high. This loss is even more tragic because 70% of workplace "accidents" could be avoided if health and safety was managed properly.

## **I've heard that UNISON is organising a minutes' silence. What is this for?**

At noon on International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD - 28 April), UNISON will hold a minutes' silence when we will remember all those harmed by their work. And we're asking UNISON staff, branches, members, and others to join in and observe the minute of silence with us. Many other unions and employers will also be observing the minutes silence. Let's make this the most "remembered" IWMD so far.

We'll also be wearing the purple forget-me-knot ribbon on the Day, and again ask as many activists and members to join us and the many others across the UK, who wear the ribbon on the Day.

## **What is UNISON calling for?**

Join our minutes silence to support our campaign!

UNISON believes that there needs to be a cultural change in the way work-related deaths, injuries, and ill-health are seen by employers, the public, and the Government. Once society sees them as not just tragic but also as totally unacceptable; we can then expect more employers to take health and safety seriously. Fewer workers will be put at risk and fewer families will suffer the emotional and financial devastation that usually follows.

This year is the first year that the UK Government will formally recognise IWMD as a national day of remembrance, thereby joining many other countries across the world.

However, achieving official recognition does not mean that the job is done. IWMD and official recognition are a means to an end – this being to raise awareness of the importance of health and safety and to campaign for safer and healthier work. Equally important is to ensure that the Day is used to campaign, organise, and recruit on health and safety at branch level. Unions make work safer, and make it most safe when everyone is involved in the union.

## **What can UNISON activists and branches do?**

### **Organise or join an event.**

UNISON branches and activists are encouraged to take part in, support, and/or send representatives to any regional or local events. Many occur across the country, organised by a combination of union branches and offices, the local TUC, trades councils, and local hazards groups. Contact any of these for your local area to find out what is being organised.

Where there are no such events, or perhaps for members not able to attend; UNISON branches are encouraged to hold their own event. Branches and safety reps could also use the Day to focus on a workplace concern; and campaign, organise, or negotiate for an improvement. The theme for IWMD this year is, *Unions Make Work Safer*.

### **Join Our Minutes' Silence.**

Whether organising or joining an event or not, join our minutes' silence at 12 midday. If you are organising or taking part in an event, try incorporating the minutes' silence into what is being organised.

### **Let us know what you plan.**

Whatever you plan to do, let us know. We want to publicize all the events and activities that UNISON members, activists, and branches organise or join. Email: [v.borg@unison.co.uk](mailto:v.borg@unison.co.uk) or tel: 020 7551 1709.

### **Other ideas include:**

- displaying UNISON's IWMD poster;
- ordering and then distributing the IWMD purple ribbons and car stickers to members (see the UNISON special webpages below);
- writing a letter to the local press about any of the campaign issues, local problems, or events you've planned;
- organising a special meeting;
- organising a safety reps inspection or carrying out some risk, hazard, or body-mapping (go to: <http://www.unison.org.uk/file/4205a.pdf> for more information);
- remembering the workers who have been killed at the workplace or in the community;
- arranging an event such as planting a memorial tree in a public place, putting up a plaque, or dedicating a sculpture, a piece of art, or a bench;
- asking local religious centres to mark IWMD;
- negotiating with the employer for joint recognition of the Day such as a joint one minute silence at 12 noon; and/or
- negotiating for any official flags on public buildings to be flown at half-mast on the Day.

Join us in Remembering the Dead and Fighting for the Living on International Workers Memorial Day, 28 April this year.

Wear the purple ribbon, observe the minute's silence, raise awareness and support our campaign.

For more information, go to: [www.unison.org.uk/safety/campaigns.asp](http://www.unison.org.uk/safety/campaigns.asp)