



**American Federation  
of Labor and  
Congress of Industrial  
Organizations**

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# AFL-CIO

## AMERICA'S UNIONS

May 1, 2025

Dear Representative,

On April 28th each year, we commemorate Workers Memorial Day, a poignant reminder of the real human cost of unsafe workplaces. We remember all we have lost on the job and recommit ourselves to fulfill the promise of a safe job, so that every loved one returns home unharmed at the end of each shift. The most recent data show that 385 people still die **each day** in the U.S. because of their jobs—more than 5,000 from job injuries and an estimated 135,000 from job illnesses, annually. These staggering numbers are completely unacceptable and entirely preventable; these deaths are a systemic failure. Behind every life lost each day is a family across the United States mourning a parent, sibling, child, neighbor, or friend.

Fifty years ago, our elected leaders made that promise to every working family in America by establishing the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), which were all entrusted by Congress to have distinct and imperative responsibilities that have allowed us to make critical progress over time.

Yet, in its attempt to restructure the Department of Health and Human Services using artificial intelligence, the so-called “Department of Government Efficiency,” functionally dismantled NIOSH—one of the most critical and impactful agencies to every worker in America, their families and to industries alike. More than 85% of NIOSH staff were placed on administrative leave, to be terminated in June. This decision must be immediately reversed as it will take working conditions back centuries, when chronic occupational diseases and fatalities skyrocketed with no government agency to help identify causes and research interventions.

NIOSH saves lives daily, in ways that OSHA and MSHA cannot. NIOSH is the only U.S. agency that has the expertise to:

- Provide initial and ongoing certification of respirators and other life-saving equipment that workers need to be safe on the job and to combat counterfeit, imported products. NIOSH certification is recognized by credible manufacturers as the global gold standard.

- o Workers (and the public) need respirators to be safe from toxic exposures working with lead and asbestos in abatement, silica in foundries and mines, infectious diseases in health care and laboratories, and chemicals in manufacturing, fighting fires and many activities in construction and maintenance work.
  - o Workers (and the public) need to know the equipment they are provided is safe and that it does not provide a false sense of protection.
  - o Employers need NIOSH to comply with OSHA and MSHA standards.
- Test other equipment like cleaning booths in mining, fluid resistance of gowns in health care, hydraulic winches in fishing, and robotic equipment in manufacturing, as well as explosive environments, dangerous mining conditions and rescue technologies, and many others.
- Help employers and worker representatives identify unknown exposures in workplaces such as clusters of cancers, digestive issues, respiratory disease and other phenomena that occur closely in one worksite, through requested Health Hazard Evaluations.
- Provide non-punitive investigations of job fatalities among fire fighters and workers in other occupations to understand how to prevent them in the future.
- Fund the only pipeline of occupational safety and health professionals in the U.S., through occupational medicine residencies, university graduate training, and training program grants.
- Fund more than 50 occupational health and safety research centers that help industries like commercial fishing, agriculture, construction, and oil and gas improve efficiency and new safety technologies to protect workers.
- Set and fund a state-of-the-art research agenda on occupational hazards such as chemical exposures, such as PFAS, heat, workplace violence, communicable diseases, and repetitive stress injuries.
- Administer and facilitate medical care and compensation for workers under the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP) for 9/11 responders and survivors and the Energy Workers Program for (Cold War civilian veterans) exposed to deadly hazards from manufacturing, testing and cleaning up nuclear weapons.

While there have been attempts to maintain some pieces of the WTCHP and Energy Workers Program, both of these NIOSH programs cannot function without the highly specialized expertise in the other NIOSH divisions, including occupational physicians, epidemiologists, respiratory disease specialists, industrial hygienists, dose reconstructors, and many others. NIOSH's work is both vast and far-reaching.

On this week of Workers Memorial Day, we urge you to take immediate action by sending letters and making phone calls to ask President Trump to reinstate all NIOSH divisions and their staff. The cost of inaction will be severe and excruciating for individuals and society. Safe jobs are a fundamental right for every worker in America and NIOSH is necessary to make this right a reality.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)  
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Postal Workers Union (APWU)  
Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) International Union  
Communication Workers of America (CWA)  
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)  
International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers (IW)  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)  
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and  
Helpers (IBB)  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)  
International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC)  
International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (IUBAC)  
International Union of Elevator Constructors (IUEC)  
International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)  
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT)  
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of  
America (UAW)  
Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA)  
National Nurses United (NNU)  
Operative Plasterers' & Cement Masons' International Association (OPCMIA)  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust (SMOHIT)  
United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of  
the United States and Canada (UA)  
UNITE HERE International Union  
United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)  
United Steelworkers (USW)  
Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA)