

# Press Release

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## Gordon Brown to inaugurate workers' memorial

Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown MP is to plant a tree to at a Workers' Memorial Day event in Beveridge Park, Kirkcaldy next Saturday (29 April).

Kevin Findlay, UNISON Fife branch Health and Safety Officer, said:

"Workers' Memorial Day is an international event held in memory of all workers killed or injured at work. It is still sadly the case that many people are suffering and dying due to work-related illnesses and accidents. The importance of this event is both to commemorate those who have suffered and to campaign for safer and healthier workplaces for today's workers."

The event, organised by the public service trade union UNISON's Fife Branch, will take place at 2.30pm on Saturday 29 April 2006 in Beveridge Park, Kirkcaldy and is open to everyone.

The Kirkcaldy event marks International Workers Memorial Day observed by trade unions on 28 of April since 1990. Last year there were at least 10,000 events in 100 countries involving 6 million people including a large number in the UK.

Workers Memorial Day marks the fact that over 2 million people are killed worldwide by their own work or as a result of someone else's work activity.

### Notes

The official HSE statistics for Great Britain record that 220 workers died of injuries sustained at work, and almost 1,900 died on the asbestos cancer mesothelioma and 6,000 for all occupational cancers. Estimates by other authorities put the figures for ill-health and deaths from work-related illness far higher at 50,000 deaths for illnesses caused or exacerbated by work each year.

In addition HSE fatality figures leave out the largest cause of work-related deaths, road traffic accidents which involve people driving as part of their work. Whatever the true figures, the fact is that work has a major effect on public health, injury and death and a great deal more needs to be done to prevent this. The costs of work related ill-health, injury and death are borne by the individuals and their families and by the state and not by the employers who caused the problems.

Unions are calling for:

- ◆ Formal recognition of Workers Memorial Day by the government;

- ◆ Amendments to the Corporate Killing Bill which will ensure that those responsible for decisions leading to death or serious injury/ill-health are held fully accountable for their actions;
- ◆ Urgent enactment of measures to make Directors legally responsible for health and safety (replacing ineffective voluntary codes of practice) which has recently been endorsed by the Health and Safety Commission;
- ◆ An end to the portrayal of legislation on health and safety as mere 'red tape' by business leaders
- ◆ Measures to increase the rights of workers and of safety reps.

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