General Field Talking Points for Workers Memorial Day, 2011

* Each year on Workers Memorial Day, working people throughout the world remember those who were hurt or killed on the job, and renew our struggle for safe workplaces.
* Today -- in town squares and union halls, at worksites and memorials, in community after community -- we have gathered to remember our brothers and sisters who have lost their lives and to fight for safe workplaces and for good jobs for all workers.
* This is a historic year for workers’ safety and health.
* It’s the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, where 146 workers – most of them young immigrant women - were killed trapped behind locked doors with no way to escape. That terrible tragedy spurred major labor reforms in New York and them other states.
* This year is also the 40th anniversary of OSHA and the right of workers to a safe job.
* Since the OSHA law and mine safety law were enacted, we’ve made great progress in making workplaces safer and protecting workers on the job.
* Workplace fatalities and injuries have significantly declined. Exposures to job hazards and toxic chemicals like asbestos and lead have been reduced. Far fewer workers are dying from trench cave-ins or from being caught in unguarded machinery.
* This progress didn’t just happen because the OSHA law and mine safety law were passed.
* It happened because workers and their unions organized, fought and demanded action from employers and their government.
* Virtually every safety and health protection on the books today is there because of the unions.
* It is the unions that won passage of the mine safety law and OSHA law.
* It is the unions that demanded and won stronger standards to protect workers from asbestos, benzene, other toxic chemicals and safety hazards.
* It is the unions that won the right to know about toxic chemical hazards in the workplace and in the community.
* It is the unions that pushed for stronger laws and regulations to prevent chemical plants from exploding and to protect workers and the community from danger.
* And it is the unions, through collective bargaining that have given workers a voice to have a say in safety and health on the job, to raise safety concerns and demand that employers protect workers from harm.
* Through our work, we’ve made jobs safer and saved lives – not just for union members, but for all workers.
* But too many workers remain in danger. There is much more work to be done.
* Last year we saw a series of major workplace tragedies that caused scores of workers deaths:

* A horrific explosion at the Massey Upper Big Branch coal mine in West Virginia that killed 29 miners – the worst coal mine disaster in 4 decades.
* An explosion at the Kleen Energy plant in Connecticut that killed 6 workers, and another at the Tesoro Refinery in Washington State that cost 7 workers their lives.
* And the BP/Transocean Oil Rig explosion that killed 11 workers and caused a massive environmental disaster and economic disaster for thousands of people along the Gulf Coast.
* Each and every day in this country, on average 12 workers die on the job as a result of workplace injuries - women and men who go to work, never to return home to their families and loved ones.
* In 2009, 4,340 workers lost their lives on the job, and another 50,000 died from occupational diseases. That’s a total of 149 workers dying each and every day.
* Here in our state, [fill in number of deaths for your state ] workers were killed on the job.
* Today, we remember all of them.

* These tragedies and deaths could have and should have been prevented. These workers should not have died.
* For eight years, the Bush Administration turned its back on workers and workplace safety. Siding with its corporate friends, the Administration overturned or blocked dozens of important workplace protections and weakened job safety programs.
* But thankfully, now we have an administration that is committed to worker safety and health and on workers’ side.
* The Obama Administration has increased the job safety budget and hired hundreds of new inspectors.
* Both OSHA and MSHA are now moving to develop and issue new rules on major hazards including silica, cranes and derricks, infectious diseases and coal dust.
* They have stepped up job safety enforcement, particularly for employers who repeatedly violate the law.
* Business groups oppose these stronger measures. The new Republican majority in Congress is doing businesses’ bidding and trying to block new protections and roll back existing protections. They have launched an all-out assault on all government regulations and safeguards. They are trying to slash the job safety budget and weaken enforcement.
* Republicans and business groups are falsely claiming that these regulations and protections kill jobs. The fact is it is these regulations and protections keep jobs and employers from killing workers.
* The real goal of the Republicans and business groups is to take away workers’ rights and weaken the role of government in protecting workers and the public.
* It’s just like the attack on collective bargaining and worker rights that is going on Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and other states.
* These attacks threaten the economic security and safety of all workers.
* Just as we are fighting back against the assault on the right of workers’ to bargain collectively for better wages, benefits and working conditions, we must fight back against the assault on workers’ safety and health rights and protections.
* We must educate, mobilize and organize union members and join with our allies in our communities to stop these efforts to turn back the clock.
* We can’t allow corporations, driven by greed, to go unchecked and put workers in danger.
* On this Workers Memorial Day, we remember and pay tribute to those who have lost their lives on the job or have been injured or made sick.
* On this Workers Memorial Day, we call for an end to the unnecessary deaths of our brothers and sisters and action on job hazards that kill and injure and stronger job safety laws and protections for all workers.

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* On this day, we pledge to fight for good jobs that will provide economic security and opportunity for our fellow citizens and rebuild our nation.
* And on this day, we commit to work together to fight the assault on workers’ right to bargain for fairer workplaces, safer workplaces, a better life and a brighter future.