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April 28 in Salem

# Governor to dedicate new Fallen Workers Memorial

SALEM —The Oregon AFL-CIO will hold a memorial service at the new Fallen Workers Memorial on the Capitol Mall at noon Tuesday, April 28 — Workers Memorial Day.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski will speak and dedicate the permanent memorial located near the main entrance of the Labor and Industries Building at 350 Winter St. NE.

The memorial service will include the reading of the names of the 62 Oregon workers killed on the job in 2008, as well as Oregon soldiers killed in military service last year. (A list of those names appears on Pages 6 and 7 of this issue.) The Oregon AFL-CIO also is asking union members to make arrangements with their employers to observe a moment of silence that day.

Workers Memorial Day was enacted by the AFL-CIO in 1989 to remember workers killed or injured on the job. April 28 was chosen because it is the anniversary of the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the day of a similar remembrance in Canada.

The Oregon AFL-CIO's Safety and Health Committee has been working for four years (finding a location, securing permits, and raising cash) to erect a memorial in Oregon. The idea started in 2005 with a resolution passed at the state labor federation's convention. Labor unions have played a role in helping construct more than 100 permanent memorials nationwide.

Ground finally was broken in Salem the week of Feb. 23. The

memorial consists of a large boulder within a landscaped sitting area in front of the L&I building. The boulder has a union-made bronze plaque attached to it with the inscription:

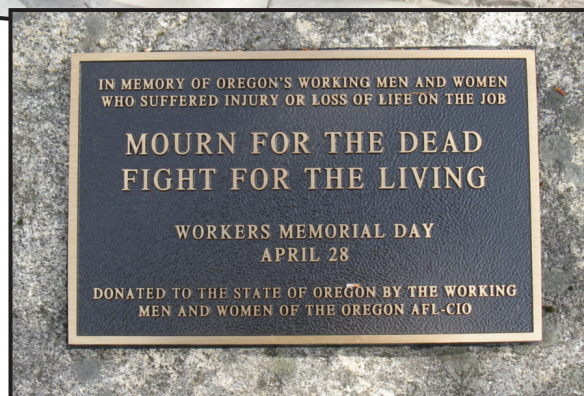
*"In memory of Oregon's working men and women who suffered injury or loss of life on the job.*

**MOURN FOR THE DEAD,  
FIGHT FOR THE LIVING**

*Workers Memorial Day, April 28.*

*Donated to the State of Oregon by the working men and women of the Oregon AFL-CIO"*

To date, \$37,500 of the \$49,765 cost has been collected for the Fallen Workers Memorial. Donations can be sent to: Oregon AFL-CIO, Worker Memorial Fund 2110 State St. Salem, OR 97301.



Photos by Steve Lanning

# Dirty Diesel: Millions of Americans exposed at work

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

It's in the air we breathe. Diesel exhaust contains at least 40 toxic air contaminants, plus soot particles so small that they bypass filters in the human body. And it's everywhere in urban air. Some people breathe more of it than others. Millions of American workers are exposed at work to diesel exhaust — truckers and loading dock workers, obviously, but also longshore, maritime, and railroad workers, school and city bus drivers, firefighters, construction workers, and others who work near heavy equipment.

The good news, for breathers, is that new heavy-duty trucks and buses have some of the cleanest engines in the world, thanks to Environmental Protection Agency rules that took effect in 2007. These new diesel engines are so clean that the air coming out the tailpipe is cleaner than the air that went into the engine — in polluted locales like Los Angeles, anyway.

The "bad" news is that diesel engines are incredibly durable. That means a "legacy fleet" of dirty older-model diesel engines is likely to be

putting worker health at risk for decades to come. There's a tow boat on the Columbia River, for example, that still runs on an engine pulled



out of a World War II submarine. These engines stick around.

So it's the job of one union member — Kevin Downing — to persuade owners of diesel engines to take measures to reduce exhaust sooner rather than later. Downing coordinates the Oregon Clean Diesel Initiative at the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and is a former president of Local 3336 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

"It takes a certain amount of convincing," Downing said, "because I really can't guarantee there will be fewer people sick on job, and I can't guarantee they're going to see reductions in their health insurance premiums. But there are tremendous benefits to the community at large."

The medical evidence, Downing says, is convincing.

"Diesels always have had a reputation for being smoky and smelly," Downing said. "But now, what we're discovering through advances in medical research is that particulates are more than a nuisance; they are a health concern.

There's increased risk for lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma, bronchitis, and other health effects."

"We can't predict on an individual basis who will experience these health effects," Downing said. "But we can say that generally with increasing exposure to diesel, we see increasing incidence of [the diseases]."

Part of the problem is that carcinogenic chemicals produced when diesel fuel combusts "stick" to the soot particles in the exhaust, and those particles are small — 2.5 microns in diameter, one-hundredth the width of a human hair. The particles are so small that they can't be trapped by nose hair or swept out by cilia cells that line the windpipe. They enter the lungs and go directly into the bloodstream, where they affect the metabolism of cells, causing inflammation and blood clotting that can lead to heart attacks.

Non-road diesel engines are the dirtiest. In Oregon, Downing said, construction equipment represents as large a segment of the total contri-

(Turn to Page 4)