

28 April 2023

Strong health and safety systems save lives

On Workers' Memorial Day, coinciding with our national strike action, Paula blogs about the importance of health and safety systems at work and the vital role of health and safety reps.

As we all take action today in our national dispute it's also time to pause and reflect as it is also Workers' Memorial Day, an event commemorated around the world and officially recognised in the UK since 2010.

This year the theme is Organising for Health and Safety. Whilst many PCS members are fortunate to work in relatively safe places, according to the [International Labour Organisation](#) each year 2.78 million workers die from occupational accidents and work related diseases. 374 million workers suffer from non-fatal occupational accidents. It is estimated that lost work days globally represent almost 4% of the world's GDP.

Aside from the economic cost, there is an intangible not fully recognised by those figures, that of the immeasurable human suffering of those injured and the families of those who have lost someone. This is tragic, because research shows that most accidents are largely preventable.

When we look to the future of health and safety at work we should also take stock of developments in the past century that have led to strong health and safety systems in some of the world, and this is now seen as a marker of social justice. That's why PCS believes we should have robust regulation of H&S at a national, European and global level, and why we will campaign to keep that regulation as the government seeks to repeal retained EU legislation post-Brexit.

Strong health and safety systems save lives. I am proud to play a small part in that working at the Health and Safety Executive, and also in my role as a H&S rep. So on the theme of organising, I'm asking members to consider becoming a H&S rep. It is a vital role and many of our workplaces are unrepresented. PCS is doing more to organise H&S reps, and challenging employers to set up building-

wide safety committees where we have multiple departments in government hubs. If you think this is for you, please get in touch with me at paulab@pcs.org.uk

For today, whilst taking strike action, please pause to remember the dead and fight for the living.