Worker deaths in Mass. reach 10-year high

Seventy workers in Massachusetts died on the job in 2016, marking a 10-year high in worker fatality rates in the Commonwealth, according to a Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH) report.

The report states that 62 of these workers died in fatal injuries at work, and eight firefighters died from work-related diseases.

Transportation incidents caused a majority of deaths in Massachusetts at 41 percent. Falls, slips and trips contributed to 28 percent of worker deaths. Contact with objects or equipment, exposure to harmful substances or environment, and violence also led to worker deaths in 2016.

The MassCOSH report says that almost all of the workers killed in 2016 were men, with just one woman who died from an occupational injury. The oldest worker killed was 74 years old and the youngest worker killed was 18 years old.

In 2012, MassCOSH reports there were 32 workplace fatalities. That number has continued to increase over the years; 48 in 2013, 49 in 2014, 63 in 2015, and 70 in 2016.

In October of 2016, Robert Higgins and Kelvin Mattocks died when the trench they were working in flooded.

The company and its owner were eventually charged with manslaughter, misleading a criminal investigator and concealing a record after officials learned he had forged Higgins and Mattocks’ signatures stating they had completed trench safety courses.

The Boston City Council passed Mayor Marty Walsh’s proposed amendments to the City Code Ordinances, now requiring those getting work permits to report all current or unsolved safety records. The state legislature is working to pass a similar act.

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On-the-job deaths hit 10-year high

April 27, 2017

A worker at a South Boston seafood warehouse was overcome by ammonia fumes. A diver drowned when his air supply malfunctioned while he was inspecting a municipal water tank in
Braintree. Two construction workers were caught in a trench that collapsed and flooded with water in the South End.

These are a few of the 70 Massachusetts workers who lost their lives last year, marking a 10-year high in the rate of workplace-related fatalities, according to a report out Thursday by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, known as MassCOSH. Sixty-two of those workers were killed on the job, many in construction; the rest were firefighters who died from occupational illnesses, such as lung cancer and heart disease.

In all, eight firefighters and two police officers died in Massachusetts last year due to occupational hazards.

Read the complete story at BostonGlobe.com.

AG addresses families of fallen workers

The family of Kelvin Mattocks after speaking to those gathered.

BOSTON – This past October, Robert Higgins and Kelvin Mattocks were working in a trench their employer, Atlantic Drain Services, knew lacked the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) required protections needed to prevent the earth from caving in around them. Atlantic Drain Services had a history of putting their workers in danger, forcing OSHA to include them in its Severe Violator program, a result of putting workers in unprotected trenches in 2007 and 2012. The careless business practices of their employer cost Robert and Kelvin their lives when a water supply line ruptured into the trench while they were working, drowning the men in a deadly mix of dirt and water. It took Boston firefighters hours to recover the workers’ bodies, one of whom was found fully encased in a standing position.

Today, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH) released a new report documenting the loss of life taking place at
worksites across Massachusetts. Titled *Dying for Work in Massachusetts: The Loss of Life and Limb in Massachusetts Workplaces*, the 27-page report details how workers like Kelvin and Robert lost their lives on the job in 2016 and what must be done to keep workers safe. [Click here to read the report.](#)

The report highlights several findings, including:

- The construction industry remains the most dangerous for workers, accounting for 25 deaths, nearly 40% of all workers fatally injured on the job.
- Transportation incidents were the leading cause of fatal injuries in Massachusetts, contributing to the deaths of 25 workers. Transportation incidents were also the leading cause of fatal injuries in 2015.
- The youngest worker killed was just 18 years old; the oldest was 74 years old. All but one of the workers killed were men.
- Eight workers who lost their lives were immigrants; their deaths accounted for 13% of 2016’s total.

The report noted Massachusetts experienced a 10 year high in its worker fatality rate. In 2012, there was one worker death per 100,000 employees. The amount grew to 1.4 deaths per 100,000 workers in 2013 to 1.5 in 2014 to 1.9 in 2016. In 2017, two workers suffered fatal injuries per 100,000 workers.

“What I hope the public takes away from this report is that worker health and safety issues are not part of history, they are very much a part of the present,” said MassCOSH Executive Director Jodi Sugerman-Brozan. “When employer precautions are not taken to protect workers, people die. “In Dying for Work, we also carefully examined how Trump Administration actions could make is easier for employers to short skirt their responsibilities to keep us safe on the job, troubling activities that could result in even more tragedy for working families.”

The report reviews the Obama-era protections repealed by President Trump’s executive orders, such as a rule for employers to maintain accurate injury records for five years and a rule which allowed the federal government to refuse to do business with companies that have a history of violating labor laws. It also discusses what proposed budget cuts to the U.S. Department of Labor could result in, such as cuts to OSHA. Currently, there is one OSHA inspector for every 115,863 workers in the Bay State. It would take more than 150 years for OSHA to pay a single visit to each workplace in the state.

“Under the new administration, we are witnessing a frontal assault on the federal institutions trusted with protecting our air, water, food, homes, heath, workplaces, and economy,” said Steven Tolman, President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. “The president claims to champion workers, but his actions have already repealed or weakened important safeguards that protect workplace health and safety in every industry.”

The release of *Dying for Work* coincides with Workers’ Memorial Day, an event observed around the world every year on April 28 to remember workers killed and injured on the job. In
Massachusetts, Workers’ Memorial Day was commemorated on the steps of the State House at noon, observed by slain workers’ family members, union representatives, safety experts, and state officials. This year, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey addressed the crowd, vowing to end all workplace deaths.

The report uncovers a broad range of measures that would avert needless loss of life and limb on the job, including:

- Hailing Boston’s leadership in refusing to grant necessary construction permits to businesses with a history of putting their workers in danger. Advocates have been pushing for this practice to be expanded statewide with the passing of H.1033 An Act relative to workplace safety.
- Increasing manslaughter penalties for employers who recklessly or negligently cause a worker to be killed or seriously injured on the job. If Atlantic Drain Services is found responsible for the deaths of two of its employees, the maximum fine it would face is $1,000. Passing, S.858 An Act to increase the penalties for corporate manslaughter would raise the fine to $250,000.
- Enacting legislation that holds companies that subcontract, outsource, or use temporary agencies jointly responsible for wages and the health and safety of those workers. By passing, H.1033 An Act to prevent wage theft and promote employer accountability, workers can be ensured these protections.

**WBUR News**

**Report: Workplace Death Rate Hits 10-Year High In Mass.**

April 27, 2017
A response team works to recover the bodies of two men who were trapped in a trench during a water main break on Dartmouth Street in Boston's South End in October. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

The rate of workplace deaths in Massachusetts is at a 10-year high, according to a labor-aligned report out Thursday.

There were 70 workplace fatalities in 2016, per the report, for a rate of 2 deaths per 100,000 employees. In 2012, for comparison, there were 32 workplace fatalities — a rate of 1 death per 100,000 employees.

Of last year's 70 fatalities, 62 workers died of fatal injuries on the job. Another eight firefighters died from work-related illnesses, including lung and esophageal cancers, leukemia and heart attacks.

The report is produced by the nonprofit Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.

Twenty-five of last year's workplace fatalities were the result of transportation incidents, the report said. Seventeen were from falls, slips or trips; 11 were the result of contact with objects or equipment; seven were due to exposure to harmful substances or a dangerous environment; and two were attributed to violence.

Construction was by far the most dangerous sector, accounting for 24 of last year's fatal injuries.

The report mentions the deaths of two drain cleaning workers, who drowned in Boston in October when a trench they were working in flooded after a water main break.

The incident — the report labels it a "preventable worksite tragedy" — led to manslaughter charges against the owner of the drain cleaning company, which had been cited for prior safety violations, and changes in city work permit policy.

"Trenching is among the most dangerous work in construction," the report states. "In Massachusetts, over the past five years, four workers have died in trench-related accidents."

The report advocates for stronger worker protections, including legislation that would hold companies that "subcontract, outsource, or use temporary agencies jointly responsible for wages and the health and safety of those workers."
"This report has been compiled to highlight these tolls," the report says. "The saddest aspect of the loss of lives and limbs is that work-related injuries and illnesses are preventable."

Letter: System lines up against workplace safety

Posted Apr 26, 2017 at 2:01 AM

On Friday, April 28, hundreds of events will take place across the country commemorating Workers Memorial Day. This past year in Massachusetts, 70 workers lost their lives on the job, as compiled by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health. Workers in transportation, construction, farming and fishing, and the maintenance occupations were the most frequent victims reported in a Department of Labor annual statistical analysis last year. But there is hardly a sector or occupation whose workers do not die in damnable numbers as a result of their work.

Latino workers were somewhat more likely to be killed on the job than white or black workers, but every ethnic group suffered. Older workers were much more likely to lose their lives through employment. (Bureau of Labor Statistics data). These unfortunate outcomes from 2015, the most recent year for which grim numbers are available, are, regrettably, not “Breaking News.”

Making matters worse (how is that possible?), proposals to strengthen exposure standards, employer reporting requirements, and a process for using a company’s safety record as an eligibility criterion in the federal contracting process are all in jeopardy under the new administration in Washington. Crudely, in a matter that is literally life and death, the administration has decreed that for every new rule affecting safety and health two existing rules must be eliminated.

Subjecting workers to lethal conditions on the job has to be the absolute bottom line in the worsening plague of inequality in the United States. If employers and regulators are not moved to seriously address this problem they must be judged to be making it worse. In the meantime, workers and their unions will continue to make a statement on Workers Memorial Day.

Kim Wilson

Director, UMass Dartmouth Labor Education Center
He Died Standing: Tales from the ‘Dirty Dozen’

National COSH solicited input from its network of 21 COSH groups around the country as well as worker advocates and labor groups to determine the 12 employers who most egregiously put their employees and communities at risk.

Apr 26, 2017 Sandy Smith

OSHA released a white paper in 2012 that estimated the total cost of a workplace fatality – legal costs, medical costs, training, lost productivity, etc. – at $8.7 million.
Roger Kerson/National COSH

The "Dirty Dozen 2017" report – which highlights 12 companies that put workers and communities at risk due to unsafe practices – was released on April 26 in observance of Workers’ Memorial Week, which honors workers who lost their lives on the job and their families.

The list was created by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH) with input from its network of 21 COSH groups in 15 states and worker advocates.
around the country. Criteria for inclusion included severity of injuries to workers, exposure to unnecessary and preventable risk, repeat citations by relevant state and federal authorities and activity by workers to improve their health and safety conditions.

The report notes that fatal workplace injuries have been falling since 1970 – the year the Occupational Safety and Health Act was signed into law. In 1970, 13,800 workers died on the job from acute occupational injuries. In 2015 – the most recent year available from the Bureau of Labor statistics – the number of workers who died on the job was 4,836; a 65 percent decline in workplace fatalities.

OSHA released a white paper in 2012 that estimated the total cost of a workplace fatality – legal costs, medical costs, training, lost productivity, etc. – at $8.7 million, which means that 4,836 fatalities carry a cost burden of some $420 billion.

Jordan Barab, former deputy assistant secretary for OSHA, mentioned that an anticipated move away from strong enforcement by the agency toward a greater focus on compliance assistance and cooperative programs, could result in more workplace injuries, particularly if combined with a proposed budget cut for OSHA of 21 percent. Such a move would be “pennywise and pound foolish,” said Barab, who compared OSHA’s annual budget of $550 million to OSHA’s estimated cost per fatality. (In addition, Liberty Mutual estimates the total cost to business of non-fatal work-related injuries and illnesses to be more than $1 billion per week.)

“The dangerous conditions at these 'Dirty Dozen' companies show why we need more enforcement of our safety laws, not less,” said Barab. “Proposed budget cuts for OSHA and other safety agencies are pennywise and pound foolish. Preventing injuries, illnesses and fatalities in the workplace not only reduces a terrible toll of human suffering – it also saves billions of dollars for employers and taxpayers.”

The Dirty Dozen

The Dirty Dozen are listed alphabetically in the report, but the list starts with a company that achieved notoriety due to a pair of horrific worker deaths and the recent indictment on manslaughter charges of both the company – Atlantic Drain Services – and its owner, Kevin Otto. In October 2016, Robert Higgins and Kelvin Mattocks were buried alive and drowned in an unsupported trench in an incident that sent shockwaves through the greater Boston area, said Jeff Newton, membership and communications coordinator for the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH).

“It was a horrific event. It took place on a very busy street,” remembered Newton. “It took hours for firefighters to extract them from the trench. One of them was found in a standing position, indicating he had been completely encased in soil and debris.”

The incident was so horrifying and caused such outrage in the Boston area that state senators are seeking to increase the penalty for corporate manslaughter, from the current fine of $1,000 – set nearly 200 years ago – to $250,000. In addition, said Newton, the city of Boston now refuses to issue work permits to companies with a history of repeat OSHA violations.
The other 11 companies, the location of their headquarters and reasons they were included on the list are:

**California Cartage, Long Beach, Calif.** – Death of a driver, serious violations in California and Georgia, lack of machine safeguards, faulty brakes and other dangerous hazards.

**Dedicated TCS, Lansing, Mich.** – Worker died in a confined space, company cited three times for similar violations, $226,000 in OSHA fines.

**Dollar General, Goodlettsville, Tenn.** – “A fire disaster waiting to happen,” over 100 citations and $1 million in fines for blocked exits, former Labor Department official called for criminal prosecution.

**Environmental Enterprises Inc., Spring Grove, Ohio** – Worker killed in fiery chemical explosion, OSHA described a “complete disregard for employee safety, indictment for involuntary manslaughter and reckless homicide.

**Fuyao Glass America, Dayton, Ohio** – No gloves allowed in a glass plant, 23 serious OSHA violations, extensive complaints from workers who are at serious risk of amputation injuries.

**Nissan USA, Franklin, Tenn.** – Five workers killed in five years, $99,000 in proposed OSHA fines, workers fear retaliation or job loss if they report injuries.

**Pilgrim’s Pride, Greeley, Colo.** – Worker fatality, numerous OSHA citations at facilities across the country over the past 5 years, amputations, exposure to toxic chemicals.

**Primeflight, Nashville, Tenn.** – Exposure to bloodborne pathogens, 22 OSHA violations in 3 years, conditions “likely to cause death or serious harm.”

**TransAm Trucking, Olathe, Kan.** – “Frozen trucker” case in which a driver, after waiting several hours for help in freezing weather when the brakes on his trailer froze, unhitched the trailer and drove off to seek warmth and was fired by his employer. (The heater in the truck cab was broken.) After a 7-year court battle, the driver won $280,000 in back pay.

**Samsung Seoul, South Korea** – 200+ serious illnesses, 76 deaths, refusal to disclose information because of trade secrets, alleged secret plan uncovered to “dominate employees” and “punish leaders” who support employees.

**Valley Garlic, Coalinga, Calif., and X-Treme AG, Kerman, Calif.** – Four migrant workers died in crash of illegal transport van, Department of Labor lawsuit, contractor enjoined from transporting agricultural workers.

Former Nissan worker Everlyn Cage said that she was injured twice while working at the company. The first time, in 2007, she suffered a repetitive motion injury that required surgery on disks in her upper back. She returned to work in 2009 and was injured again in 2012, this time to her lower back. When she suffered the injury, she asked her supervisor if she could go to the
medical clinic on site. He allegedly told her that she needed to finish her shift. She did and when she was done with her work rotations, he met her with a permission form to visit the onsite clinic. She refused and instead went to the emergency room. Her personal physician recommended an extended leave from work and after a year, Cage was fired from Nissan.

Employees suffered “pretty horrific injuries, major injuries” at the Nissan facility, according to Cage, but “were afraid to report them, afraid they’d be fired.” Employees suffering injuries she felt required a trip to the emergency room were instead directed to the on-site medical clinic, where “they were given ibuprofen and sent back to work.”

“Every day in the United States, workers are getting hurt, getting sick and dying from preventable causes,” said Martinez. “We know how to make our workplaces safer. We’re calling on these companies to implement effective health and safety programs including, which must include worker participation. These firms need to eliminate workplace hazards and take action so that every worker can return home safely at the end of his or her shift.”

Tomorrow: More details about some of the companies listed on the “Dirty Dozen.”

Bay State fatalities hit 10-year high

Marie Szaniszlo Saturday, April 29, 2017
Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey (right) greets Bob Bryant who lost his brother Norval Bryant in a construction accident in Lynn on January 7, 2016 during the Workers' Memorial Day at the State House, Friday, April 28, 2017.
Seventy workers lost their lives in the Bay State last year — a rate that hit a 10-year high — and 13 others have already died in 2017, often in situations that were completely preventable, according to a shocking new report.

Of the 70 workers who died in 2016, 62 died from fatal injuries and the eight others were firefighters who died from occupational illnesses, according to the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health.

That means two workers died for every 100,000 employees in Massachusetts — the highest rate in the last decade and double the rate at which workers died only five years ago, when 32 workplace fatalities were reported, according to “Dying for Work: Loss of Life and Limb in Massachusetts Workplaces.”

“What I hope the public takes away from this report is that worker health and safety issues are not part of history; they are very much a part of the present,” MassCOSH Executive Director Jodi Sugerman-Brozan said in a statement. “When employer precautions are not taken to protect workers, people die.”

People like 52-year-old Norval Bryant, who was working without a safety harness or netting on the roof of a Lynn home on Jan. 7, 2016, when he fell 17 feet, a fall that split his head open and caused one of his ribs to puncture his heart, his brother, Bob Bryant, said.

“Somebody’s life is at risk when things aren’t done the right way,” Bob Bryant said. “Too many people die to save someone a dollar.”
Like Norval Bryant, 28-year-old Jason Sanderson didn’t have worker’s compensation on Nov. 19, 2016, when the circular saw he was using to cut a water main pipe in front of the Duxbury home his employer was building hit him in the neck, his wife, Jennifer Sanderson, said.

Since then, she and their three children, ages 2 to 10, have gotten by largely on donations to a GoFundMe page her family and friends started for them, she said.

Yesterday, she and Bob Bryant joined other victims’ families to mark Workers’ Memorial Day on the State House steps, where Attorney General Maura Healey said her office has worked with state Sen. Jennifer L. Flanagan to file a bill that would update the state’s corporate manslaughter law.

“For years, some corporations responsible for tragedies in Massachusetts have gotten away with a slap on the wrist,” Healey said. “Our bill will put a stop to that and send a strong message to the entire business community: If you can’t protect your workers, you can’t do business in Massachusetts.”

Loved ones honor workers killed on the job in Massachusetts

70 workers died in 2016

| Updated: 5:45 PM EDT Apr 28, 2017
BOSTON —

Somber moments were shared at an event honoring those who were lost while doing their jobs in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health held a commemoration titled Workers’ Memorial Day on Friday in front of the State House to honor workers who were injured or killed on the job, many of them under circumstances that could have been prevented.

Seventy workers lost their lives while on the job in 2016, the highest rate over the last 10 years. MassCOSH’s report said fatal injuries at work killed 62 of those workers, and eight firefighters died from work-related disease.

The report highlighted the tragedy that occurred in Boston’s South End, when two workers, Robert Higgins and Kelvin Mattocks, died when a trench collapsed. Atlantic Drain Services and its owner Kevin Otto, were charged with two counts of manslaughter in connection with their deaths.
“What I hope the public takes away from this report is that worker health and safety issues are not part of history, they are very much a part of the present,” said MassCOSH Executive Director Jodi Sugerman-Brozan. “When employer precautions are not taken to protect workers, people die.

On-the-job deaths hit 10-year high

In October 2016, a trench collapsed on Dartmouth Street in Boston, killing two workers.

By Katie Johnston GLOBE STAFF APRIL 27, 2017
A worker at a South Boston seafood warehouse was overcome by ammonia fumes. A diver drowned when his air supply malfunctioned while he was inspecting a municipal water tank in Braintree. Two construction workers were caught in a trench that collapsed and flooded with water in the South End.

These are a few of the 70 Massachusetts workers who lost their lives last year, marking a 10-year high in the rate of workplace-related fatalities, according to a report out Thursday by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, known as MassCOSH. Sixty-two of those workers were killed on the job, many in construction; the rest were firefighters who died from occupational illnesses, such as lung cancer and heart disease.

In all, eight firefighters and two police officers died in Massachusetts last year due to occupational hazards. All but one of the 70 fatalities were men.

The number of worker deaths has been rising steadily statewide since 2012, when there were 32 fatalities, and the rate of workplace deaths has doubled during that time to 2 per 100,000 employees in 2016.

Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, co-executive director of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, said the rise in deaths reflects the increase in workers employed by subcontractors and staffing agencies that are less invested in worker safety.

Goldstein-Gelb’s group is a federation of local and statewide groups, including MassCOSH, that are made up of nonprofit coalitions of labor unions and health and technical professionals.

She said the decline of labor unions and the growing number of undocumented workers, who fear retaliation if they identify unsafe conditions, have also likely contributed to the increase in fatalities.
“When workers can’t speak up, then there is a greater risk that a hazard will not be identified and addressed and workers will suffer the consequences,” she said. “The less people speak up, you will see an increase in deaths.”

Nationwide, the number of people killed at work hit a seven-year high in 2015 — 4,836 — the most recent data available, according to a separate report this week by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, although the rate dropped from 3.43 per 100,000 employees in 2014 to 3.38 per 100,000 employees.

Deaths from occupation-related illnesses are not counted in the national report but are estimated to cause an additional 95,000 fatalities every year.

The increased number of deaths but lower mortality rate could reflect the improving economy, with more people working. But the death rate among Latino workers actually rose from 2014 to 2015, to 4 per 100,000 workers, the highest rate of any ethnic group.

The national report singles out 12 employers that put their workers at risk, including Atlantic Drain Services in Roslindale, which is facing manslaughter charges in the deaths of two workers, Kelvin Mattocks and Robert Higgins, who drowned when the trench collapsed in the South End last fall.

The firm, which has a history of safety violations, tried to mislead investigators by forging documents stating that employees had attended safety classes, according to the Suffolk district attorney.

Those deaths led the Boston City Council to pass an ordinance requiring contractors to submit their safety records before they can receive a work permit.

Similar protections have also been proposed at the state level. The Legislature is also considering increasing corporate manslaughter fines from $1,000 — a rate set in 1819 — to $250,000.

The rise in workplace deaths comes as the Trump administration and the Republican-controlled Congress have approved or proposed rolling back a number of rules intended
to protect workers. Already, an Obama-era regulation requiring federal contractors to disclose and address safety violations has been overturned, as has a rule extending the length of time large companies are required to maintain records of injuries and deaths — or face citations — from six months to five years.

Proposed budget cuts to the Department of Labor would mean the elimination of the Chemical Safety Board, which investigates chemical fires and explosions, and training programs for workers in low-wage, dangerous industries, according to the report.

One of the first actions President Trump took when he took office was to sign an executive order to eliminate two regulations for every new regulation enacted.

The move was applauded by the National Federal of Independent Business as a good first step toward eliminating “ball-and-chain regulations” that the business group says cost employers money and hamper job creation.

Katie Johnston can be reached at katie.johnston@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter @ktkjohnston.

10 area workers died from work-related causes in 2016

BOSTON — One day at work last fall, William O’Connor Jr., 42, was helping remove counterweights from a crane in downtown Boston when he was crushed and killed.
The Ashland husband, brother, and son was among the nearly a dozen MetroWest and Milford area residents who died of work-related causes last year, according to a new report.

With job-related deaths hitting a 10-year high, families of fallen workers gathered Friday in front of the Statehouse to mourn their losses, search for answers and call for reforms.

“All these things are preventable,” Attorney General Maura Healey told the crowd that gathered for the annual Workers’ Memorial Day. “If people do the right thing, if they respect the dignity of work and the workers who show up every day, these things don’t happen.”

In 2016, 70 Massachusetts workers died from injuries or illnesses suffered on the job, the most of any year in the past decade, according to an April 27 report from MassCOSH, the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health. The total includes eight firefighters who died from job-related illness and 62 workers who suffered fatal injuries.

Local workers who died

The following people from the MetroWest/Milford area died from work-related causes in 2016:


-Nicholas Penza, 18, of Bellingham, a pizza delivery driver, died Feb. 5, 2016.

-Thomas Clardy, 44, of Hudson, a state trooper, died March 16, 2016.

-Gerald Bunker, 70, of Ashland, a firefighter*, died April 28, 2016.

-Geraldo Santos, 43, of Framingham, a construction worker, died July 26, 2016.

-Barbara "Sarge" Clement, 64, of Milford, a constable, died Sept. 1, 2016.


-Marco Vinicio Lema Lala, 20, of Milford, a construction worker, died Sept. 8, 2016.

-Manuel Guaman, 52, of Milford, a construction worker, died Sept. 8, 2016.

-William "Bill" Deveaux, 55, formerly of Northborough, an electrician, died Dec. 9, 2016.

*List includes firefighters who died from work-related illness.

Hudson’s Mark Stockholm, 56, a chef who co-owned Classic Occasions Caterer for 24 years, died Jan. 20, 2016, from injuries sustained in a fall, leaving behind a wife, children and grandchildren, according to an obituary.
A motorist struck and killed State Trooper Thomas Clardy, 44, a Hudson husband and father, while he was conducting a traffic stop on the Mass. Pike on March 16, 2016, according to state police.

In Marlborough, electrician William Deveaux, 55, was attempting to replace a light bulb when he fell from a ladder on Dec. 9 and later died, according to OSHA and MassCOSH reports.

Transportation-related accidents, including car crashes, were the leading cause of work-related deaths in 2016, contributing to 41 percent of all worker deaths in Massachusetts. Falls, slips and trips accounted for 28 percent of worker deaths.

Other causes of death include contact with objects or equipment, exposure to harmful substances and workplace violence.

The number of statewide work-related deaths has increased each year since 2012, when there were 32 fatalities. Since then the rate of workplace fatalities has doubled to two deaths per 100,000 workers.

“We should not be going backwards, brothers and sisters,” AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman told the crowd Friday.

Brockton resident Kelvin “Chuck” Mattocks and Rhode Island resident Robert Higgins were killed on Oct. 21 in Boston, when a construction trench they were working in collapsed and flooded.

When Mattocks died, the family lost its “heartbeat” and “unsung hero,” his sister, Melinda Mattocks said.

“He was a wonderful husband, son, father, grandfather and cousin to all. He died doing what he loved to do: work,” she said from the podium. “His legacy and love will forever be remembered.”

Their employer, Atlantic Drain Services of Roslindale, is facing criminal manslaughter charges and $1.4 million in OSHA fines. Suffolk County District Attorney Dan Conley’s office alleges the firm forged employees’ signatures on forms certifying they received safety training.

Following the deaths of Mattocks and Higgins, the Boston City Council passed an ordinance requiring firms to report their safety records before receiving construction permits. A similar proposal was introduced in the state Legislature earlier this year.

As in other years, Massachusetts worker deaths in 2016 were heavily concentrated in the construction industry, which accounted for nearly 40 percent of workplace fatalities.

Another one of those victims is Jason Sanderson, 28, of Carver, who left behind a wife and three young children, including 18-month-old twins.
Sanderson was cutting a water pipe at a Duxbury job site on Nov. 19 when his saw kicked back into his neck, killing him. When he released the trigger, the saw blade kept spinning, said his mother, Michele Mather.

“I still can’t believe it happened,” Mather said in an interview Friday. “It shouldn’t have happened. I believe it was a freak accident caused by faulty equipment.”

Mather wants to see reforms enacted to require stringent checks of all equipment used by contractors and subcontractors.

“These kids have lost their father and will never know their father,” she said. “I feel someone should be held accountable.”

MassCOSH board member Melissa King lost her father, Paul King, in 2005. A maintenance subcontractor doing work for JetBlue, the Medford native was electrocuted 12 years ago in an accident at Logan International Airport.

“We need to realize these aren’t just workers you see from 9-5,” King said in an interview after Friday’s ceremony. “These are people with families. It’s a truly awful feeling to see a loved one leave in the morning and know they may not come home at night.”

MassCOSH Executive Director Jodi Sugerman-Brozan said an increasing reliance on subcontractors and temporary laborers, who often aren’t subject to strict safety oversights, are contributing factors.

“I think another thing is immigrant workers are feeling less secure in speaking up when they see a problem,” she said in an interview.

Those attended the ceremony advocated for reforms, including increased penalties for employers who violate safety standards.

Current penalties, Sugerman-Brozan said, are too low to be a deterrent. Many employers, she said, cut corners to save money and time, and view current penalties as a cost of doing business.

State Sen. Jennifer Flanagan, D-Leominster, has also introduced legislation to increase the fine for corporations convicted of manslaughter from $1,000 to $250,000. Under the proposal, the state could debar those corporations for up to 10 years.

The corporate manslaughter penalty hasn’t been increased in nearly 20 years.

“For far too long in Massachusetts, corporations involved in terrible tragedies have gotten away with a slap on the wrist,” Healey said.

The attorney general said she hopes to see reforms that “send a message” to employers that safety is paramount.
“If you can’t protect your workers, you cannot do business in Massachusetts,” she said. “It’s as simple as that.”

Daily News staff writer Jonathan Dame contributed reporting.

10-year high for workplace deaths in Mass.

According to the Massachusetts Coalition For Occupational Safety And Health, 70 Massachusetts workers died from workplace injuries or causes in 2016.

In all, 62 workers died on the job; the other eight were firefighters who died of workplace-related disease, according to the report released late Thursday by the advocacy group known as MassCOSH. Several were in Central Massachusetts.

An electrician in Marlborough, an arborist in Leominster, and a recycling worker in Northbridge all died last year. Several of the local workplace fatalities were in public safety, including Auburn police officer Michael Tarantino, who was shot last May, and State Trooper Thomas Clardy, who was killed on the Mass. Pike in Charlton when another driver slammed into his parked vehicle last March.

A 70-year-old worker who worked at at Nashoba Valley Ski Area in Westford for five decades also died last November.

So far in 2017, two Central Massachusetts workers have died -- a Fitchburg firefighter and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning worker in Millbury.

MassCOSH profiled several of the victims, including the Bellingham delivery driver, 18-year-old Nicholas Penza. In a February snowstorm early last year, his vehicle went off the road and hit a telephone pole. He was taken to a hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.
Several of the cases were investigated by OSHA, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, according to MassCOSH.

Among them are 26-year-old arborist Nicholas Kallio, who fell while working in Leominster, 60-year-old Paul Trioisi, who was struck while working in Phillipston, and Roger Fournier, a 35-year-old mechanic who was struck while on the job in Bellingham. Fines were levied in the Kallio and Fournier cases, but not in Triosi's death.

Statewide, the most common cause of death was an automobile accident, with almost half of the cases. Other causes included falls, slips or trips, as MassCOSH categorizes it, contact with objects or equipment, or exposure to harmful substances. Two people were killed in workplace violence incidents.

A total of 24 deaths took place in the construction industry. The most notable case may have been the two Boston workers who drowned in a construction trench last October.

MassCOSH scheduled a morning memorial event outside the State House steps Friday, Workers' Memorial Day, to honor the workplace accident victims.

"Work continues to kill and maim workers in epidemic and alarming numbers," the group said in the report. "This report has been compiled to highlight these tolls. The saddest aspect of the loss of lives and limbs is that work-related injuries and illnesses are preventable."

Here are the Central Mass. workers who've died on the job since the start of 2016:

- Ricardo Oliveira, 22, construction worker, Sutton
- Nicholas Penza, 18, pizza delivery driver, Bellingham
- Nicholas Kallio, 26, arborist, Leominster
- Gerald Bunker, 70, firefighter, Ashland
- Ronald Tarentino Jr., 42, police officer, Auburn
- Alfred Lemoine, 74, recycling worker, Northbridge
- Paul Troisi, 60, construction worker, Phillipston
- Nelson Antonio Umanzor, 38, truck driver, Littleton
- Geraldo Santos, 43, construction contractor, Maynard
- Barbara Clement, 64, town constable, Milford
- Roger Fournier, 35, mechanic, Bellingham
- William Deveaux, 55, electrician, Marlborough
- John Folkes, 54, HVAC worker, Milbury
- Diane Fitchel, 62, grocery store employee, Acton
- John Mulcahy, 63, firefighter, Fitchburg

Source: MassCOSH