

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS TO MARK WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

[*YOUR DATELINE HERE*] (ILO news) B Workers, employers and governments in all countries of Eastern Europe and the Central Asia will mark the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April, drawing attention to work-related accidents and illnesses that annually take some 2 million lives and cost the global economy an estimated US\$1.25 thousand billion (\$1.25 trillion), according to the International Labour Office (ILO).

Events planned for the day include safety exhibitions, publications of OSH books, and opening of OSH centres, newspaper articles, radio programmes and other media events. Several ministries of labour in the CIS countries have requested regions to organise separate events ranging from safety promotion to tripartite meetings. The trade unions in several countries are organising OSH information campaigns.

At ILO offices in Geneva, top government, worker and employer representatives will participate in a round-table discussion on *Creating and Promoting a Health and Safety Culture in a Globalized World* on Monday 28 April.

The observance of World Day is intended to bring a tripartite focus to the annual Workers' Memorial Day that has been organized by the worldwide trade union movement since 1996. The discussion at the ILO will focus on the challenges of reducing the toll of death, injury and sickness at the world's workplaces, with special attention to prevention techniques that have proven themselves as effective in both avoiding occupational accidents and disease and in improving business performance.

An injury and disease are not 'all in a day's work', says ILO Director-General Juan Somavia. 'Fatalities, accidents and illness at work can be prevented. We must promote a new 'safety culture' in the workplace - wherever work is done - backed by appropriate national policies and programmes to make workplaces safer and healthier for us all.'

Costs of workplace injury and illness

In a booklet issued for the world day entitled *Safety in Numbers*¹, the ILO reviews current knowledge about the toll of workplace illness, injury and death which it says costs some \$1,250,000 million US dollars (\$1.25 trillion) in annual losses in global gross domestic product (GDP). The ILO said its estimate was based on a calculation that accidents and work-related illnesses cost some 4 percent of annual GDP.

¹ *Safety in Numbers: Pointers for a global safety culture at work*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2003, ISBN 92-2-113741-4. Available online at http://ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/worldday/press_index.htm

In addition, the report says that costs borne by society due in part to work-related accidents and diseases include early retirements caused by disability that on average shorten working life by about five years; absenteeism that varies from 2 to 10 percent depending on sector and type of work; unemployment that may stem from impairment of working capacity due to illness and affects an average of one third of all unemployed people; and poverty at home caused by the partial or full loss of income and is especially acute among women workers.

The report also cited ILO data showing that some 5,000 job-related deaths occur each day, or some 2 million each year. In addition, the report notes that workers suffer approximately 270 million occupational accidents - of which 355,000 are fatal - and 160 million occupational diseases each year, including some 12,000 child labourers who die from work-related causes.

The booklet also highlights the impact of poor health and safety on a company's bottom line and provides information on how workers and employers can work hand-in-hand to create a safety culture to improve workplace occupational safety and health.

For more information, see the ILO website or a special web site www.ilo.org/safework/safeday or email Asafeday@ilo.org. You may also contact the ILO Department of Communication at +41 22 799 7912 (Acommunication@ilo.org) or the ILO SafeWork Programme on +41 22 799 6716.