

# TUC

Changing the world  
of work for good

# International Workers' Memorial Day 2020

A guide for unions.

#IWMD20



# #IWMD20: Remember the dead, Fight for the living

*Every year more people are killed at work than in wars. Most don't die of mystery ailments, or in tragic "accidents". They die because an employer decided their safety just wasn't that important a priority. International Workers' Memorial Day (IWMD) commemorates those workers.*

## **What is IWMD?**

Every year on April 28th, all around the world, the trade union movement unites to mark International Workers' Memorial Day (#IWMD20).

We remember those who have lost their lives at work, or from work-related injury and diseases. We renew our efforts to organise collectively to prevent more deaths, injuries and disease as a result of work.



Workers Memorial Day is commemorated throughout the world and is officially recognised by the UK Government.

We remember those we have lost. We fight in their memory.

## **Theme for 2020: Coronavirus**

The heart-breaking number of workers who have died from coronavirus is a tragedy felt deeply by us all. Too many of our friends and colleagues have fallen ill, lost their lives or continue to be put at risk at work every day. Many more will be grieving the loss of loved ones.

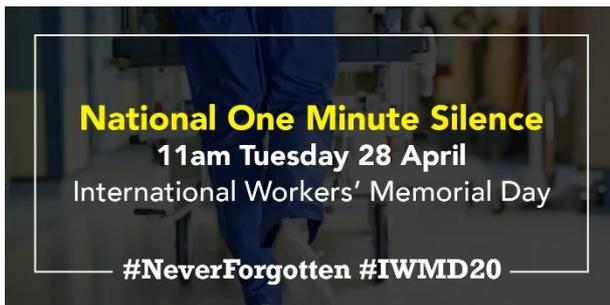
The coronavirus pandemic affects every worker regardless of sector or locality. Tens of thousands of workers worldwide have died. More have fallen ill or continue to go to work risking their lives. Many workers are still attending work ill-equipped and without necessary safety measures in place.

We could not have a starker reminder of the important role of trade union health and safety reps in saving and protecting workers' lives, than the current crisis we are living through.

While we may not be able to attend the memorial events which usually take place on IWMD, as public gatherings around the world are not advised or allowed; there are many ways trade union members can take part in our collective day of remembrance and solidarity.

## How you can take part

### Minute silence



At 11am on Tuesday 28th April, take part in the minute's silence.

It will be a moment to pay tribute to the sacrifice made of so many workers during the pandemic, to remember those who've

sadly lost their lives, and to thank all those who continue to do vital work at great risk.

The initiative is supported by the government, and reps may wish to request employers mark it, by asking the workforce to cease work for one minute at 11am.

Help spread the word about the minute's silence, by encouraging as many friends and colleagues to take part, whether in their workplace or at home.

You can quickly spread the word by [posting this tweet](#), [sharing this facebook status](#) or [asking your contacts on WhatsApp](#) to join you in taking part in the silence.

### Register for our video call



The TUC Education team will be hosting a video call at 2pm on the day, where you will be able to hear from speakers and submit questions and contributions in advance.

[Register now for the video call.](#)

## Organise an online campaign

Think of digital tools you can use to call for stronger health and safety protections. Whether it a current call for urgent PPE, or a longer term demand for union recognition - you can make use of the TUC's [Megaphone tool](#) to create a petition about the issues where you work, or email and call elected officials to demand that workers' safety is prioritised over corporate interests.

## Host a video call or webinar

Where you might have ordinarily held a rally to mark IWMD, it could be done online, with union members having the opportunity to hear speeches. You could ask injured workers and family members who can talk first-hand about the need for strong health and safety protections, the importance of campaigning and of strong and active unions. Consider inviting elected officials and community leaders to participate in the call.

## Events and stunts

If you are working on the front lines during the outbreak, organise an event at your workplace to promote the issues of workers' right to a safe job and hold your employer accountable for keeping you safe. It could be a socially distanced stunt, a minute's silence or a lunch time letter writing exercise. Reach out to the press to increase public awareness of the dangers working people face on the job.

## Become a rep, recruit a rep

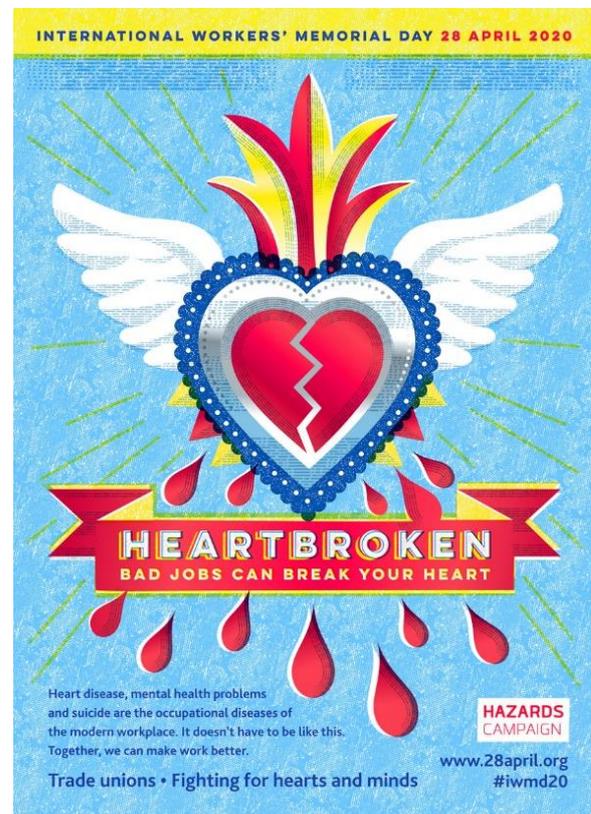
Every day, trade union health and safety reps in workplaces save lives and prevent illness and injury.

Does your workplace have a health & safety rep? If not, contact your union about becoming one. If it does, why not train up more reps? Contact trade unionists you know who'd make great safety reps and encourage them to take on the role.

Read our [guide on being a health and safety rep here](#).

## Display a poster

Use the window of your home or your workplace noticeboard to raise awareness of #IWMD20, or share one digitally online. Hazards Campaign have produced a poster, which you can download in high-res [here](#).



## Support for the bereaved

Trade unions have been crucial in securing bereavement and compassionate leave in workplaces. As we come together to remember those who have lost their lives, as union activists we can also reach out to support those experiencing grief.

There may be practical steps unions can take to remember colleagues, like a book of condolences or setting up an online memorial page. Some branches have established online fundraisers for a charity close to the heart of a colleague, or to raise money for the family to cover the cost of a funeral.

Experiencing a bereavement in isolation will be particularly tough. Attendance at funerals is currently restricted due to social distancing measures, but a minute silence or vigil could allow colleagues the opportunity to come together to remember collectively. Union branches may also wish to send a card, flowers or other tokens to the family.

## Use and share resources

The International Trade Union Confederation has created resources, and these posters are available in a number of languages via <http://28april.org/>



Hazards Campaign have also produced a number of 'Exposed at Work' sharable

graphics, which can be found [here](#).



When sharing stats and stories, reference [The Whole Story report](#) from Hazards Campaign, which gives the full picture of work-related deaths based on research.

Reel News has produced [an excellent video](#), featuring construction workers.

Construction is already one of the deadliest jobs, with serious safety hazards - this video explains why their work is even more dangerous during the pandemic.

## Further information

You can find the [TUC's guide to unions on coronavirus here](#),

A guide for campaigning "[10 tips for organising](#)" in the crisis [here](#),

And an [e-learning tool on organising on coronavirus here](#).

Previous TUC webinars on coronavirus can be accessed [here](#).

## **Find out more**

For more information about the campaign, go to:  
[tuc.org.uk/workers-memorial-day](https://tuc.org.uk/workers-memorial-day)

Shelly Asquith, TUC Health & Safety Policy Officer  
[sasquith@tuc.org.uk](mailto:sasquith@tuc.org.uk)