



**TRIANGLE FACTORY FIRE:** On MARCH 25, 1911, a fire broke out at a NY garment factory. Within 18 minutes, 146 workers—mostly young women locked in the factory — were dead. (Image: Detail, *History of the Needlecraft Industry*; Ernest Fiene, 1938)

# **WORKER HEALTH & PUBLIC POLICY: STILL A BURNING ISSUE?**

**Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>: UCLA Alumni Center Conference Room  
12:00-1:00 (Speakers/Panel) / 1:00-1:30 (Discussion)**

**SPEAKERS:** *Linda Delp: Director, UCLA-LOSH*  
*E. Richard Brown: Director, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research*  
*Ellen Widess: Newly appointed Chief, Cal/OSHA*

**PANELISTS:** *CHIRLA/Domestic Workers Alliance California Bill of Rights*  
*CLEAN Carwash Campaign*  
*Don't Waste LA Campaign*

**Sponsored by UCLA-LOSH ( Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program)**

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**UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH)**

**UCLA Center for Health Policy Research**

**UCLA School of Public Health**

**Endorsed by: UCLA History Department**

For more information, contact UCLA-LOSH: (310) 794-5964 / For a map of the UCLA campus: [www.ucla.edu/map](http://www.ucla.edu/map)

**REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED**

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# PROTECTING WORKER HEALTH: A CENTURY OF STRUGGLE

## **100 Years Ago—The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire**

On March 25, 1911, a massive fire killed 146 workers at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York's Lower East Side. The Triangle Company employed about 500 workers—nearly all young Jewish and Italian immigrant women.

When the fire broke out, many workers were trapped behind doors that had been locked to prevent them from taking breaks or stealing scraps of fabric. Those who died either burned to death or jumped from the upper floors to escape the flames.

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) had gone on strike a few years earlier and met strong opposition from business interests.

Rose Safran, a Triangle worker referring to the 1909 strike: *"Two of our demands were for adequate fire escapes and for open doors...but we didn't get the open doors or better fire escapes. So our friends are dead."* (Stein, [Triangle Fire](#); p. 18)



The fire was the largest industrial disaster in New York City's history and generated a huge public outcry. The Governor appointed a Factory Investigation Commission to examine sweatshop conditions throughout the state, laying the groundwork for sweeping reform under the New Deal; improved working conditions and health policies for workers; prohibition of child labor; and fire safety rules.

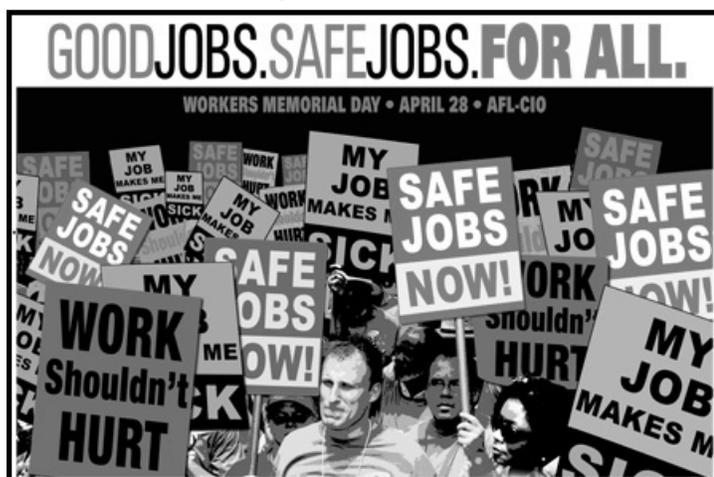
## **40 Years Ago—Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)**

On April 28, 1971, OSHA opened its doors. Established by the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act, it heralded a new era in the history of public efforts to protect workers from harm on the job. The Act established for the first time a federal program to "assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women."

In the first 40 years, an estimated 400,000 workers lives have been saved. But OSHA has come under periodic fire, particularly from business interests claiming that regulations to protect workers are simply too costly and will kill jobs.

## **April 28, 2011—Workers' Memorial Day**

In one month of last year, the death of 29 workers at the Upper Big Branch Mine in West Virginia and 11 at the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf Coast made national headlines. But while gripping workplace disasters attract media attention, many more workers are invisible: 14 die each day with no headlines. Another 50,000 die each year from occupational disease and almost 5 million suffer work-related injuries.



On Workers' Memorial Day, the date of OSHA's anniversary, we remember those workers and continue the struggle for safe jobs for all. Linda Rae Murray, President of the American Public Health Association, asserts: "We must invest in safe workplaces by.... strengthening OSHA. If we fail, tens of thousands of workers will continue to die because of their jobs."