



2024 WORKER MEMORIAL DAY

APRIL 25, 2024

Commemorating workers who
died in Washington as a result of
job-related injuries and illnesses.





2024 WORKER MEMORIAL DAY

April 25, 2024 | L&I Auditorium

Welcome

Joel Sacks, Director, Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries

Posting of the Colors

Washington State Department of Corrections Honor Guard

Invocation and Benediction

Jeffrey Jones, DOC Chaplain,
Cedar Creek Corrections Center

Speakers

Governor Jay Inslee

April Sims, President,
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Bob Battles, General Counsel and Government Affairs
Director, Association of Washington Business

Kris Tefft, Executive Director and General Counsel,
Washington Self-Insurers Association

Barbara Bojang, mother of Demetrius Sellers,
a worker who was honored in 2023

Chris Huynh, Supervisor, L&I, Claims Administration

Steven Yunker, Compliance Manager, L&I, Division of
Occupational Safety and Health

Musical Tributes

Scott Dellinger and Shawn Lamb,
Puget Sound Fire Fighters Pipes and Drums

Tumwater High School Noteables

Bell Ringers

Mark Armstrong, Fire Prevention Officer,
Tumwater Fire Department

AC Bates, Battalion Chief, Tumwater Fire Department



*Tributes provided by
family and friends of
workers lost in 2023*





Ruslan Basarab, 49

Ruslan was driving a semitrailer from Seattle to Idaho when he passed away in a motor vehicle accident. Ruslan immigrated to the United States in 2005 from Lviv, Ukraine. Described as very hardworking, he often spent much of the week on the road. He is remembered as being responsible, reliable, and very family oriented. When he was home, Ruslan enjoyed fishing and playing soccer with his two sons. An animal lover, he liked to take the family dogs for walks at the lake. Ruslan was a very religious person who loved most being home to spend time with his family.

— Solomiya Levkiv, wife



Mike Coppess, 68

Mike worked 40 years as a fleet diesel mechanic at a beverage company, followed by two years at a mobile medical diagnostic imaging company. He was tragically killed while installing an air spring bag underneath a tractor-trailer. He enjoyed fishing, golf, woodworking, bike riding, and, most of all, spending time with family. He coached many sports teams and lived his life serving others with a constant smile. Mike is deeply loved and missed by his wife Laura, to whom he was married 40 years, their two children, four grandchildren, and many relatives and friends. Mike is forever in our hearts.

— Laura Coppess, wife



Paul Currier, 75

Since he was a young boy growing up near Port Orchard, Paul wanted to drive a big truck. That was what he was doing in 1986, driving a logging truck. On a trip to pick up a load, Paul was struck by a tree. He never walked again and had limited use of his hands. With determination, grit, and a little stubbornness, he lived for more than 36 years after the accident before complications from the accident took his life. He lived independently and did a great job raising his son. He liked watching NHRA drag racing, playing computer games, and listening to country music. He also loved talking to anyone and had a great sense of humor.

— Jeanne Sherman, sister



Bert Holmes, 44

Bert, who worked as a mechanic, died when his vehicle collided with the back of a semitrailer. He was a man you will always remember; his personality was one of a kind. Better known as Tig, he left behind five children, all of whom were his best friends. He was a man who lit up a room just by walking into it. He was a man who gave you life advice and wanted you to succeed. His laugh was contagious and his jokes were off-the-wall funny. Tig worked hard for his kids every single day. His hobbies included going to the lake, driving his side-by-side vehicle, and dancing. We miss him every single day and hope he is watching over us with that big bright smile.

— Carly Holmes, mother of Tig's children



Robert Schiemer, 46

Better known as Bo, he proudly served the citizens of Tacoma as a firefighter for the Tacoma Fire Department for 12 years before succumbing to occupational cancer. While Bo loved his career, what he loved more was his wife, MJ, and his children. He was happiest when he was outdoors with his family and was always finding new projects around his house. Bo was always helping others. It could be new firefighters, friends, or a person he just met that day. He always had a smile on his face and a desire to serve others.

— Matt Frank, friend



Jeffery Still, 54

Jeff was a superintendent at Robbins and Company Housemoving. He passed away after a tire blew out on his dump truck, causing him to lose control of the truck. Jeff loved his family above all else. He glowed when he talked about his sons Brandon and Dylan. He loved coaching them in soccer and baseball. He played soccer himself his entire life. He also loved camping with his family. His friends said in high school he was often the designated driver, always looking out for his friends, a trait he demonstrated throughout his life. He was hardworking and dedicated to those he loved.

— Karlene Still, mother of Jeff's sons



Higinio Torres, 51

While working at a tire shop, Higinio Torres was changing a tire when it exploded, resulting in fatal injuries. He was a caring person who everyone appreciated in so many ways. We couldn't have asked for a better uncle or friend for most of us. Higinio was a big soccer fan, and his favorite team was Pumas in Mexico. We were indeed blessed to have him here with us and share many moments. We will continue to give and love the way he did with every person he met.

— Adan Piza, nephew



Jose Torres-Cabrera, 50

Jose was married to Alicia for 30 years, and together had three children of whom they are very proud. Jose started working in the logging industry when he was 18 years old. He knew the job like the back of his hand because he worked in the industry for 32 years. On March 18, 2023, unfortunately he lost his life when hit by a falling log while doing the job he always loved. He was a loving, appreciative person. Our hearts hurt from not having him here today with us. He will always live in our hearts.

— Alicia Torres-Cabrera, wife



Alvin Vaughn, 61

Alvin's unwavering faith and love for his family, friends, and community brought light to numerous lives. Being the pastor of Beacon Avenue Church of God, he embodied a servant's heart, always willing to lend a hand and make friends. He was known for his ability to bring joy and laughter wherever he went. His passions included fishing, basketball, travel, and quality time with family. He spent 36 years as a devoted firefighter for the Port of Seattle. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2016, he fought the disease until his passing on Christmas Day 2023. His loving family and friends will always miss and love him deeply.

— Thomazine Vaughn, wife



Michele J. Williams, 61

After graduation from Washington State University in 1983, Michele was hired by the Seattle Fire Department. She was one of the few women and one of just three African American women firefighters at that time. Michele was kind, thoughtful, and generous. She was also smart, clever and witty, a problem solver, and a perfectionist. Being athletic and adventurous, she excelled at many activities. She liked the outdoors and working with her hands. She loved animals and enjoyed gardening. An only child, Michele called herself her mother's "Favorite Daughter." Even if she had siblings, she would have easily been the favorite.

— Elaine Williams, mother

The State of Washington



Proclamation

WHEREAS, in 2023, job-related injuries and illnesses cut short the lives of nearly 100 workers in Washington; and

WHEREAS, loved ones, friends, and co-workers of fallen workers are left to endure indescribable pain and suffering; and

WHEREAS, the families of these fallen workers experience economic hardship, as well as emotional devastation; and

WHEREAS, business, labor, and government must remain diligent in their efforts to prevent workplace deaths, injuries, and disease; and

WHEREAS, a memorial ceremony provides all of Washington the opportunity to pay tribute to these fallen workers and rededicate ourselves to workplace safety and health;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim April 25, 2024, as

Worker Memorial Day

in Washington, and I urge all people in our state to join me in this special observance.

Signed this 15th day of March, 2024

Governor Jay Inslee



Donna R. Allison ▪ Erik A. Baker ▪ Kim L. Barton
Ruslan Basarab ▪ Perejitei E. Bekewe ▪ Esmeraldo R. Bobadilla
John W. Carr ▪ Samuel S. Cartmell ▪ Lawrence R. Cash
Walter M. Castilleja ▪ Charles T. Cate II ▪ Charles W. Clayton Jr.
Joseph K. Cole ▪ Michael D. Coppess ▪ Paul L. Currier
Jimmy W. Curtsinger ▪ Clayton E. Daneker ▪ Angela C. Delgado
Levi J. DeLong ▪ Katie A. Duhnke ▪ Drew O. Eiche
Bryson Fitch ▪ Faustino Flores Rodriguez ▪ Robert L. Fowler
Adrianna L. Freeman ▪ Ascencion Garcia Castillo
Lester R. George ▪ Shane L. Gooding ▪ Charles W. Groff
James M. Harding ▪ Dennis E. Hicketier ▪ Jessyca L. Hohn
Bert A. Holmes ▪ Nicholas Isenhardt ▪ Wendell R. Jacobs
Heidi J. Jaeger ▪ Mark D. Jelinek ▪ Jesus A. Jimenez
David Jones ▪ Hansoo Kim ▪ Erin L. Ladue ▪ Danny E. Legard Sr.
Ronald R. Lehrschall ▪ Daniel Lopez ▪ Patrick Mabin
Douglas J. Martirossian ▪ Robert L. May ▪ Sean McCool

Gary R. McKennett ▪ Sergio R. Mejia Perez ▪ James R. Monarko
Ashley J. Morris ▪ Jeremiah H. O'Neal ▪ Gilberto Padilla
Seok C. Park ▪ Robert M. Perkins ▪ Erin D. Peterson
Gerald L. Plato Sr. ▪ Jerry F. Posey Sr. ▪ Raymond D. Powell
Jose M. Reyes Silva ▪ David L. Ridley ▪ Richard F. Rinehold
Christina E. Robison ▪ Paul A. Rockwell
Oscar Rodriguez Olivera ▪ Magdaleno Rodriguez Oliveras
Victor N. Rubio ▪ Jesse L. Rumsey ▪ Robert L. Schiemer
Jorge Segundo Segundo ▪ Robert F. Shambhalla
Brian D. Sherman ▪ James W. Shirey ▪ Darrell Shreve
Douglas G. Smith ▪ Jay A. Solberg ▪ Michael A. Sparrowgrove
Jeffery A. Still ▪ Higinio L. Torres ▪ Jose Torres-Cabrera
Raymond R. Tungate ▪ Joe E. Valdez Jr. ▪ Alvin D. Vaughn
Jose Velez ▪ Ana L. Vetter ▪ Michael F. Wall
Jedd D. Walters ▪ Randall J. Washut ▪ David J. Welch
Daniel R. Williams ▪ Michele J. Williams ▪ John R. Wilson



The Worker Memorial Garden, on the grounds of the Department of Labor & Industries headquarters in Tumwater, serves as a year-round remembrance of fallen workers.

In 2007, a brass bell sculpture by artist Tom Torrens was donated by the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council and installed in the garden.

The garden and bell are dedicated to all Washington workers who died from a workplace injury or illness. Each year at the annual Worker Memorial Day ceremony, family and friends ring the bell in honor of their loved ones.