



2020 Workers' Memorial Day Scholarship Essay Contest

Each year during Worker Memorial Day ceremonies on April 28th, workers, legislators, members of organized labor unions, worker advocates and others gather together to honor the memory of those workers who have lost their lives because of workplace injuries or illnesses. The ceremonies highlight the sacrifices made by these workers and of the families left behind and inspire us all to work harder on behalf of the welfare of all workers.

This year the Connecticut AFL-CIO Health and Safety Committee wishes to commemorate the **10th Anniversary of the Kleen Energy Plant Explosion**, a workplace tragedy in Connecticut's recent history in which six workers lost their lives while performing a dangerous and inherently unsafe process that releases natural gas at a high pressure to remove debris from fuel gas piping. Besides the six men who lost their lives, dozens of other workers were injured and other coworkers and the first responders who arrived to help were traumatized by the images of the death and destruction of the explosion.

As you respond to the prompt below, the Connecticut AFL-CIO Health and Safety Committee hopes that you will be inspired to think about the importance of

workplace health and safety and of the consequences that arise when workers are forced to toil in unsafe working conditions.

Entries will be judged anonymously on content, originality and clarity of vision. The winners of this contest will be asked to share a portion of their essay during our 2020 Worker Memorial Day event on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, at 12 noon, at the Bushnell Park Worker Memorial: <https://www.ctaflcio.org/events/workers-memorial-day-hartford-2>.

1st Prize is \$1,500

2nd Prize is \$1,000

3rd Prize is \$500

It is Sunday morning, February 7, 2009, and a crew of workers are working at the Kleen Energy Power Plant in Middletown, CT. The plant has been under construction since 2007, and, in order to maintain the deadlines for the completion of this project, management has set up another “blow down”, a dangerous and controversial procedure to purge the gas pipes of debris by using the gas itself at a high pressure of approximately 650 pounds per square inch. There is concern by some of the workers because they are smelling gas in the courtyard into which the gas is being expelled. Suddenly, at 11:17, there is a powerful explosion followed by flames erupting from the massive gas pipes fueled by the natural gas being pumped through them. Within minutes the gas is shut down, but the damage has been done. Six workers, including the men who were measuring the gas levels lie dead and dozens more are injured. Those who are not physically injured are left in shock and with the vivid and horrific memories of seeing their coworkers lying dead or injured.

Six families are left to mourn the loss of a father, brother, uncle or grandfather. Coworkers are left to mourn the loss of a friend and a coworker. Many of the injured are left with permanent physical disabilities and the ripple effect of this tragedy for workers and first responders alike leads to post traumatic stress disorder or other

mental health or substance abuse disorders. Those workers who survived the explosion and are able to return to work suffer additional financial and emotional stress because the plant construction is halted for almost a year after the explosion.

You may be a survivor of this tragedy, or perhaps you have lost a friend or a loved one in this explosion. You may be a first responder called to assist in the aftermath of the explosion, or you may be a worker advocate who believes that this workplace tragedy could have been avoided by using another purging technique, but you are one of those individuals who are spurred to action to insure that such a tragedy would not occur again.

In 1,000 words or less, write about your response to this tragic workplace event, how it would affect you as a young adult and how you would ensure that workplaces were safer for workers in the future.

Please email the completed essay and application below to pamela.ctcosh@snet.net or send it to

ConnectiCOSH
683 North Mountain Road
Newington, CT 06111
ATTN: Pamela Puchalski

The essay and application must be received by April 1, 2020.

Application

Student's Name _____

Home or Mailing Address _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Parent(s)/guardian(s) name(s): _____

High School Name: _____

High School Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

