Report: W. Va., Montana Among Deadliest States For Workers

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (AP) — Union members from across West Virginia are gathering to remember fallen workers as a new report puts the state among the 10 worst for on-the-job fatalities.

The West Virginia AFL-CIO planned to observe national Workers Memorial Day on Wednesday in Huntington at Local 317 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

The observance honors 50 West Virginia workers killed in 2010, including the 29 men who died in an explosion at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch mine near Montcoal and three men killed a blast at the AL Solutions chemical plant in New Cumberland.

Wednesday also was the 33rd anniversary of a scaffolding collapse at a power station under construction in Pleasants County that killed 51 workers.

United Steelworkers Local 2911 at ArcelorMittal scheduled a service at 9 a.m. Thursday in the new Steelworker Memorial Park in Weirton. Relatives of some of the 108 steelworkers who died over the years at the former Weirton Steel Co. were expected to attend.

The national AFL-CIO issued its annual report, "Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect," to coincide with the commemorations. It's the 20th year for the state-by-state analysis, and its rankings and death rates are based on preliminary Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 2009. Numbers for 2010 aren't yet available.

The national report says 4,340 workers — an average of 12 per day— died of traumatic injuries on the job in 2009, down nearly 900 from the 5,214 deaths reported in 2008. Tens of thousands more died of occupational diseases.

The overall rate of fatal injuries was 3.3 per 100,000 workers, the report said, down from 3.7 per 100,000 workers in 2008.

Montana had the highest death rate with 10.8 per 100,000, followed by Louisiana and North Dakota (both 7.2), Wyoming (6.8) and Nebraska (6.1).

West Virginia finished in the bottom 10 at 42nd, with a death rate of 5.4 per 100,000 workers.

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