

DAILY NEWS

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Rally with mock funeral procession calls for better safety at NYC's construction sites

By Chelsia Rose Marcus, Reuven Blau



Participants in a rally outside of City Hall carry caskets to symbolize the construction workers who died on the job in 2015.

Thousands of workers, advocates, public officials, clergy and community members held a rally Thursday to demand greater safety measures on construction sites across New York City.

Eighteen workers died during the last federal fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2014, through Sept. 30, 2015) at job sites in New York City, the Daily News first reported two months ago.

That's up from 12 during the previous 12 months and seven the year before that, according to the U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration.

On Thursday, participants at the rally in front of City Hall carried a casket in a bagpipe-led procession to symbolize the construction workers who died on the job in 2015.



Thousands of workers rally Thursday to demand greater safety measures on construction sites across New York City.

The majority of the deaths involved non-union workers, records show.

"We're being looked at through a microscope and they're just being looked at through a Coke bottle," said Eddie Spiess Jr., 50, of Lindenhurst, N.J., who is a member of Ironworkers Local 40.

"More union people make for a stronger, safer work environment. Our training is very extensive. We need more apprentices working under professionals — that's how you learn," he added.



Workers, advocates, public officials, clergy and community members rally for stricter safety measures.

Mark Kovatch, 49, of Rosedale, N.J., an ironworkers union member, agreed.

"The city needs to hold these contractors accountable," he said. "They (contractors) are hiring people who are not qualified and these people are paying for it with their lives."

Before the rally, advocates and construction workers placed a hardhat and candle at the site of each death to remember those who died this year.



A worker fell six stories to his death at this construction site in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, in April. Eighteen workers died during the last federal fiscal year at job sites in the city.

"Tragedies at construction sites have become all too common," said Gary LaBarbera, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York.

"We are outraged — and all of New York should be outraged — that irresponsible developers and contractors increasingly are putting their bottom lines ahead of the workers who are the lifeblood of their businesses. This must end."