

# Dairy Worker Safety Act



A dairy farm worker dies on the job every 16 months, on average, in Washington state. Every day, at least one dairy worker suffers a job injury that's reported to the state. Since 2009, the number of reported injuries has increased from 362 to 438 in 2013.

## **Dairy employers are failing their workers, and the industry has refused to change.**

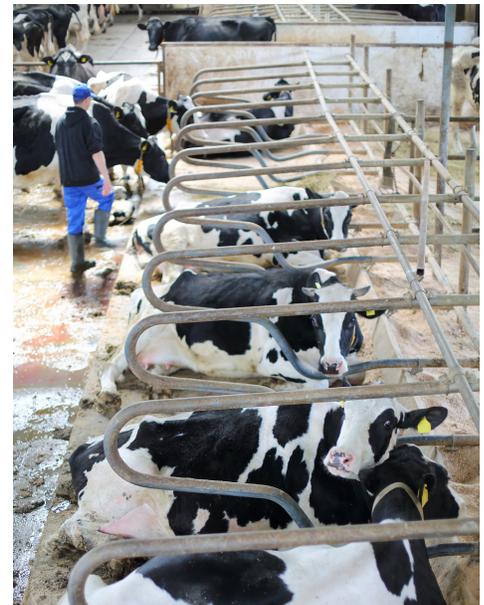
That's why the State Legislature should adopt significant dairy safety legislation in 2016. As the industry produces over \$1 billion a year in dairy products, its farms are exempted from basic workplace health and safety standards. While the industry thrives, the workers who make it all possible are routinely exposed to dangerous, deadly hazards.

All farm work involves long hours and large industrial equipment, but dairy farm workers also breathe foul air containing bacteria and manure dust, they move quickly over slick cement floors, and they are frequently kicked and stepped on by 1,500-pound animals. They have been trampled by cattle, struck in the head by broken rolling doors, asphyxiated on methane gas, and drowned in unmarked manure ponds.

A significant intervention is needed. The Legislature must equip dairy employers, dairy workers, and the Department of Labor and Industries with the tools to prevent injuries and death in this growing industry.

## The Dairy Worker Safety Act:

- ❑ **Training** – All dairy workers and their supervisors will be provided training, developed by L&I, to ensure that best safety practices are used in dairies. Non-governmental organizations could also provide this training provided it meets minimum L&I standards.
- ❑ **Inspections** – L&I will create a Dairy Emphasis Unit to adopt basic standards for dairy safety. Dairy farms will be regularly inspected for workplace hazards, and consultation services will be provided to prevent accidents before they become claims.
- ❑ **Protection from Retaliation** – Workers will be protected from retaliation if they file complaints for safety and health violations.
- ❑ **Penalties** – In instances of willful violations of safety rules, the minimum penalty would be increased to \$7,000, with an additional penalty paid to the families of workers who are killed due to these willful violations.



The Dairy Safety Act is part of the Shared Prosperity legislative agenda of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO that includes a range of issues that address economic opportunity and justice.

906 Columbia St. SW, Olympia, WA, 98501 – 360-943-0608

Contact WSLC Government Affairs Director Joe Kendo at 206-747-8279 or WSLC Legislative and Policy Director Eric González Alfaro at 509-293-0959.