

# HONOREE: GAIL BATESON

The occupational safety and health community will be diminished with Gail Bateson's retirement. Gail has been an effective activist, strategist and leader in the field for her entire career, and Worksafe was fortunate to have her at its helm for the past seven years.

Gail's career in occupational safety and health started back in 1979, when she was an intern with Tony Mazzocchi at the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Union. She went on to work for the International Chemical Workers Union, the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley, and the Occupational Health Branch of the California Department of Public Health. Gail joined Worksafe as Executive Director in 2009.



Gail's work has included occupational safety and health policy, program and curriculum development, and training in many areas of occupational health. She has primarily worked in disciplines that focus on early detection and elimination of hazards through human factors, process safety, workplace organization, and expanded workers' rights.

One of her great joys was to spearhead the Occupational Health Internship Program (OHIP). Inspired by her own training with the OCAW, and seeing the need to raise a new crop of occupational safety and health activists for the next generation, she partnered with Dr. Bob Harrison, Chuck Levenstein, and others to form OHIP as a national program. OHIP recruits and places students in unions, worker centers, and community based organizations, giving them real experience in the occupational safety and health field. Gail led the OHIP program from 2004 to 2009.

When she came to Worksafe, the organization was primarily known for its excellent legal advocacy. Gail's goal was to expand Worksafe to include serving as a political and scientific force for workplace safety and health. Building on the previous work of the organization, she sought to create a cohesive reform agenda that had four key points: giving workers a voice, enacting strong laws and regulations, ensuring adequate enforcement, and making sure that workers who speak up are protected.

During Gail's tenure, the organization took an active role in passing the Global Harmonized System and the Green Chemistry Standard. Although those fights were not won nationally, Worksafe helped ensure that they were passed in California.

In 2011, Worksafe published "Dying at Work in California" in honor of Workers Memorial Day. The report, which has since become an annual publication, captured the state of the occupational health crisis at that point and promoted best practices and strategies to improve conditions for workers. This led to developing an organizational focus on retaliation against workers who report injuries or hazards, and a statewide campaign against this particular threat to workers' safety. As Gail says, "If workers don't have a voice on the job, they can't exercise their rights." The report has been used as a model by National OSHA and other groups.

In addition, Gail and the Worksafe legal team sought to build stronger alliances with organizations that directly serve low-wage workers. Relationships with legal aid organizations and worker centers helped these groups advocate for their clients by expanding the focus on wage theft to include working conditions and workers safety. By partnering with organizations that support workers in warehouses, carwashes, recycling, and food processing, Worksafe has expanded its capacity to serve low-wage workers often excluded from traditional labor protections. Most recently, Worksafe has successfully pressed for landmark citations from Cal/OSHA on indoor heat exposure and worked to follow through the appeals process to make sure these citations stick.

Thank you, Gail, for devoting your life to improving conditions for workers. Worksafe has benefitted tremendously from your leadership, organizational skills, and dedication to advancing our mission.