

Testimony of

Casey Jones  
Daytona Beach, Florida

On behalf of the

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Before the

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Education and Labor  
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

On

“Workplace Safety: Why Do Millions of Workers Remain Without  
OSHA Coverage?”

May 24, 2007



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*American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees,  
-CIO*

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Good Morning. My name is Casey Jones and I am from Daytona Beach, Florida. I would like to thank the Chairman and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today.

On January 11, 2006, my husband and best friend, Clyde Jones, was taken from me and the children, family, friends and community who loved him. He was only 40 years old. He went to work one morning for the City that he loved to a job that he loved. He never came home.

Clyde put his life on the line for you and me and countless others while on duty with the U.S. Army in the Gulf War. We trusted our lives to him, but the government which he served so proudly did not place his life in their trust in any fashion whatsoever.

He was instructed by the City of Daytona Beach to repair a building damaged by the hurricanes of 2004. The roof, which was to be removed, was directly over tanks holding highly flammable and dangerous gases which escaped through venting pipes at the waste management plant where he worked.

Clyde was not a roofer. He worked in general maintenance. He had no knowledge of the dangers associated with these tanks he worked around every day for the last 7 years, because there had never been any safety meetings for him and other workers. He did not know of the dangerous gases which were escaping because he was never advised such a situation existed, nor were there warning signs or other precautions given to him.

He was instructed to go with other workers and using lighted torches, they began cutting away the torn metal roof to start the repair process. My husband was in a crane which was used to lift the metal pieces as they were cut. As the lighted torch cut through the metal, the gases coming from the vent exploded into a horrible fireball. The tanks and pipes



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broke and hot flammable gases were directed into the cab of the crane, where my husband was severely burned. He was transported to the hospital where I work. The doctors who knew him cried uncontrollably because of their empathy for the unbearable pain he was in. Clyde was burned over 90 percent of his body with 3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns. He was stabilized at the hospital and then air-lifted to Orlando Regional Medical Center 60 miles away to the burn unit. Clyde suffered through a detriment cleaning process that finally showed the severity of his burns. When Clyde was brought to his room and I had the opportunity to see him once again I was devastated. I spent several hours with him to comfort him and promised that I would be strong for him and would be there throughout his recovery. I received a call the next morning from the doctor informing me that Clyde had no chance of recovery and they were keeping him on life support until the family could say their goodbyes. The City has shown no mercy.

Every day countless men and women go to work with nothing to protect them from the harm that faces them from doing their jobs as they are instructed. There were no safety meetings in advance of the work that day. There was no review or even a written plan as to how to safely proceed. There was no safety precautions taken such as spark arresting mats or other devices required in private industry to be used whenever lighted torches are part of the work conditions. There were numerous regulations in place through OSHA, and had Clyde been working for private industry, these regulations would have likely saved his life and prevented the explosion from ever occurring. However, none of these regulations or safety considerations were in place because the City of Daytona Beach, like so many other governmental agencies, did not have to abide by OSHA standards. Thus, not having to comply, no one cared enough to voluntarily comply. Daytona Beach did not even have a Safety Officer on payroll at the time, because no one required them to do so. They cut the budget for that position when the law did not make such a position mandatory.

The government that my husband loved and served did nothing, absolutely nothing to provide him with a safe place to work. They simply ignored any responsibility for his safety because they did not have to provide a safe work environment as a city government. When people hear this, the sounds of such words echo with disbelief. I still cannot believe this could happen in a world wrecked by the lessons of poor preparation and the need to vigilantly protect one another at all costs.

My husband's life was not the only one taken that day. Another co-worker died and another still suffers with terrible burn injuries.

Only you can help. Sadly, cities and other smaller governmental agencies will not take action to save lives unless they are told they must do so. The budget is more important to the city than the people who work for the city.



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Only you can help. The state that he loved has also ignored the cry for help. A bill was presented to the State House of Representatives in Florida which would have required local governments to meet minimum OSHA safety requirements. The bill never made it to the floor. The safety of local governmental workers who make up such a large part of the work force is not a priority in the State of Florida at the present time.

Only you can help. The Chemical Safety Board, responsible for investigating this tragedy, found numerous basic safety issues which were ignored due to the lack of any requirement that the City adhere to such standards. It concluded that had any of these basic safety standards been in place my husband would be alive today. They met in a public forum to present their findings. Important members of the community were present. They pleaded for action. None was taken. Only you can help.

You can not help my husband or the others that have suffered but you can help to save lives and the devastation caused by horrific injuries to the future victims and future families. I am here only for that purpose. I am here, hoping that my husband's life was not taken in vain. If you will listen to my story. If you would only know the person that Clyde Jones was, you would realize that we cannot afford to lose another man or woman like him. He is the backbone of what makes our country work. At over 6 feet and 270 pounds, he was a very big man. He worked hard every day. He carried a lot of people's needs on his broad shoulders. As big as he was, his heart was even larger. His heart would break even more if he knew that he died, senselessly, with no one wanting to prevent something like this from happening again.

My heart breaks as I speak. I know that he did not have to die. My heart breaks for his children. They will never understand why he died. My heart breaks for those that have lost family and friends in similar situations, all so needlessly. All so senseless.

I am now sitting in front of the leaders of my country. I never dreamed I would sit in such a place. I never dreamed I would have the courage to speak these words. I am honored to be here on behalf of my husband and so many others. I pray you will take on the responsibility that others have avoided taking. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for letting me speak today. God bless each one of you.

Only you can help make sure this does not happen to others.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Jones  
Daytona Beach, Florida