**4.01** **Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Legacy Reading- page 1**

**Worker Safety - The Triangle Fire Legacy: Triangle Shirtwaist Fire**

In this lesson you will learn how one event that occurred more than a century ago – the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire – led to many of the worker health and safety protections that we have in the United States today. You will compare and contrast details of the Triangle Fire with a more recent incident concerning workplace safety. As a culminating activity, you will assess the potential costs, benefits and effectiveness of various government and labor actions that can be used to improve worker safety.

### PROCESS

**Activity 1: The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire**  
American workers at the beginning of the last century considered worker health and safety important. But they did not have the protections we have today. Many government rules taken for granted now – such as well-marked accessible exits, fire alarms, sprinklers, and ventilation systems - were not required in workplaces. While there were calls for federal occupational safety and health laws as early as 1878, government policy was generally hands-off when it came to the regulation of business. Labor unions – the organizations workers look to for protecting employee interests – existed but were often weak. The organization of women workers was just getting started.  
  
All of this changed with the events that occurred in a New York City clothing factory on one warm Saturday afternoon. The date was March 25, 1911. To find out what happened, read:   
  
[The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire](http://www.historybuff.com/library/refshirtwaist.html)   
[The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: 1911](http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/triangle-shirtwaist-fire) 

Adapted from the Council for Economic Education: <http://www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.php?lid=542&type=educator>