



# The Office of Compliance Celebrates Women's History Month



The Office of Compliance celebrates Women's History Month and acknowledges the accomplishments of women in the workplace safety and health community.

Women have been an important part of safety, health and environmental history for many years. As inventors, occupational health providers, administrators, engineers, medical providers, politicians, and educators, women have influenced every aspect of the safety and health and the environmental profession. Alice Hamilton was a pioneer in toxicology, studying occupational illnesses and the dangerous effects of industrial metals and chemical compounds

on the human body. Kevlar, a material used to make many safety products, including bulletproof vests and cut resistant gloves, was created by Stephanie Kwolek and has saved thousands of lives. Automobile safety was improved by Mary Anderson's invention of the windshield wiper.

Not only is March Women's History Month, it also marks the 101st anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, which had a monumental impact on workplace safety and health. On March 25, 1911, around 4:40 in the afternoon, a fire began in a trash can under the desk of a garment worker. As the fire grew, workers were trapped in the building, due to locked doors and poor escape routes. As a result of the fire, smoke inhalation, and falling to their deaths, 146 garment workers died that day, 129 of them were women. This tragedy marked an important turning point for workplace safety throughout the United States: improved factory safety laws were passed and the first Workers' Compensation laws were implemented. Frances Perkins witnessed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and became an activist for safety in the workplace. President Roosevelt recognized her commitment to the issue and appointed her as the first female Secretary of Labor.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire also led to the founding of the American Society of Safety Engineers ("ASSE"), an organization which supports safety, health and environmental advancements through outreach, advocacy, standards development, and education of safety professionals around the world. Women have taken an active role in ASSE, most notably by establishing Women in Safety Engineering ("WISE"), which is focused on furthering career opportunities for women in workplace safety and health industries.

Acknowledging the 100 year Anniversary of ASSE, WISE initiated a project entitled '100 Women Making a Difference in the Safety, Health & Environmental Profession'. Of the 100 Women Making a Difference were Marjory Anderson CSP, a safety engineer with the Office of the Architect of the Capitol; and Terry Wigfall, ASP, the compliance manager with the Office of Compliance. Numerous other women work daily in key positions throughout the Capitol Hill complex, making a difference in the health, safety and environment of Legislative Branch employees.