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KENNEDY PRAISES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HEALTH AND SAFETY RULE
Long overdue standards will help to protect nation's energy workers

Washington, D.C.—Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy praised the Department of Energy for making much-needed changes to a safety rule. Senator Kennedy said: "This rule will provide long-awaited safety protections that will benefit over 100,000 workers across the country. I applaud the critical changes that the Department has made to ensure that America's energy workers have the strong protections they need and deserve. And I look forward to continuing to work with them to improve the safety conditions for our nation's workers."

Senator Kennedy has been a vigilant champion for stronger safety standards for energy workers. He and Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY) were lead sponsors of Atomic Energy Act section 234C, which directed Department of Energy to create federally enforceable safety standards—with appropriate fines and penalties—to apply at DOE facilities. These workers previously had no enforceable safety protections under federal law.

Kennedy and colleagues were critical of the Department of Energy's initial rule in December 2003. The Department withdrew its first rule and issued a new proposed rule in January 2005. Kennedy and Bunning suggested several needed changes to that rule, such as ensuring workers can exercise their rights not to work under dangerous conditions, and establishing an enforceable rule to protect workers from beryllium exposure. The final regulations address many of these concerns.

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