



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 16

Emergency Response Team

WHEREAS, no worker should ever be injured or killed while trying to earn a living. Every worker deserves to return home safely and as healthy as when he or she reported for work; and

WHEREAS, every death or catastrophic injury leaves a trail of survivors, including friends and family burdened with tragic and sudden losses and co-workers struggling with the impact of continuing to work where an accident occurred; and

WHEREAS, a study of USW workers in facilities with incidents of significant injury or death revealed that our members experience higher rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than police, firefighters or even the military; and

WHEREAS, the USW's Emergency Response Team (ERT) sends highly skilled and trained responders to the site of fatal or catastrophic accidents in both Canada and the United States to respond to accidents and tragic events to ensure critical services and support are available, including advocacy, and counseling to victims, their families, their co-workers and the local union; and

WHEREAS, the Emergency Response Team responded to 160 workplace accidents since the last Convention, including incidents that caused 66 fatalities. In the past 3-plus years, hundreds of other active and retired members also died as a result of exposure to workplace contaminants, carcinogens and other environmental causes, while thousands more suffered injuries as a result of their work; and

WHEREAS, some injuries or deaths may be linked to defective equipment, design or other issues that may be outside traditional workers' compensation laws. In those cases, workers and their families may be able to take additional legal action, and the USW can make referrals for such legal representation as appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the Emergency Response Team includes volunteer district coordinators in each USW district who provide quicker response times and adds an additional layer of compassion, dedication and professionalism to those impacted by death and catastrophic injury; and

WHEREAS, responding to ERT calls can be stressful, ERT coordinators are sometimes required to take periodic sabbatical leaves. This allows them to rejuvenate mentally and emotionally. ERT has recently begun utilizing some of these coordinators who choose to return. Upon returning, they will slowly begin responding to ERT calls with ongoing support and counseling from ERT Office resources.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- (1) We will never falter in our fight to make all workplaces safe.
- (2) We will continually advocate for workers and their families through the ERT, working to mitigate suffering wherever possible and ensuring that all survivors get the help they need.
- (3) We will promote legislation that holds negligent employers accountable for workplace injuries and deaths such as the *Stop the Killing – Enforce the Law* campaign in Canada.
- (4) We will ensure the continuing growth of the Emergency Response Team (ERT) program through International and District conferences, meetings and educational opportunities. We will encourage district ERT coordinators to discuss the program at the local union and Central Labor Council meetings in their respective areas.
- (5) We will provide quality training and support for ERT district coordinators so they can enhance their skills, knowledge and materials.
- (6) We will continue to provide the emotional and psychological support to ERT coordinators who require time to heal after responding to the traumatic and catastrophic accidents and situations they have responded to.