



**UNITED STEELWORKERS**  
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION



# RESOLUTIONS

## Resolution No. 16

### Emergency Response Team

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

**WHEREAS**, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) responded to 220 workplace accidents since the last Convention, including incidents that caused 144 USW fatalities. Over the last 5 years, hundreds of other active and retired members also died as a result of exposure to workplace environmental concerns, while thousands more suffered injuries and illnesses as a result of their work; and

**WHEREAS**, every death or catastrophic injury leaves a trail of survivors, including friends and family burdened with 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, fire-fighters or even the military; and

**WHEREAS**, the USW's U.S. Emergency Response Team sends highly skilled and trained responders to the site of fatal or catastrophic accidents to investigate the incidents and make critical services available, including advocacy and counseling to victims, their families and their co-workers; 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 in the United States 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 (ERT) continues to follow the purpose of the program, we have discovered that there is also a positive influence on other USW Departments, including:

1. Health & Safety
  - a. New Research & Studies on Accident Prevention.

b. Set Up New Safeguards for other USW locals.

2. Financial

a. Members have become more active in their locals since an accident has occurred at their site.

b. ERT is a drawing card for future mergers.

3. Collective Bargaining

a. USW has incorporated new and better collective bargaining language for affected families in an ERT situation.

b. It is imperative that we have strong union leave language in our contracts.

4. Education and Political

Educate USW members of the research that ERT has compiled in order to lobby for better regulations to enhance OSHA, MSHA etc. for better worker protection.

5. Organizing (External)

By assisting all victims and families, local union, contractors, management sheds a positive light on the USW union as a whole.

a. ERT does not ask for anything from the members or locals it is a service freely given to the members therefore it promotes growth and activism

b. Organizing internally to help educate non-dues paying members of the value of supporting the union.

c. We have witnessed in our visits to non-dues paying victims their desire to start paying dues again thanks to ERT service provided.

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

**WHEREAS**, Some District ERT Coordinators are required to take periodic sabbatical leaves due to number of cases they have responded to over time. This allows them to rejuvenate emotionally and mentally due to the stressful nature of their positions.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that:

1. We will never falter in our fight to make all workplaces safer.

2. We will continually advocate for USW members and their families through the ERT, working to mitigate suffering wherever possible and ensuring that survivors get the help they need.

3. We will promote legislation that holds negligent employers accountable for injuries and deaths.

4. We will ensure the continuing growth of the Emergency Response Team program through international and district conferences, meetings and educational opportunities. We will encourage district ERT coordinators to discuss the program at 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.