



UWUA Health & Safety

WHEREAS, For generations, the UWUA has fought to improve health and safety on the job for our members. Private sector workers have benefited from the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) for nearly 50 years, yet there are no national health and safety standards for public employees. Furthermore, strong health and safety laws and regulations are under attack by greedy corporations and aided by their anti-worker allies in federal, state, and local government; and

WHEREAS, Our union has been a leader in improving workplace health and safety. At the national level, the UWUA has become increasingly involved in helping to formulate regulations and create higher standards, with UWUA representation on the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration panel to improve pipeline safety and as part of the American Society of Safety Professionals to strengthen safety management system standards; and

WHEREAS, Even under the best circumstances, government standards are not enough. Better working conditions cannot be won without committed local union health and safety activists. Every UWUA workplace should have a strong program for finding and fixing hazardous conditions. Not only do union safety and health programs improve working conditions, they also build and strengthen our union; and

WHEREAS, To assist our members in addressing workplace hazards, the UWUA created the Systems of Safety Hazard Awareness (SOS) program. These Power for America Training Trust (P4A) workshops are led by union members who teach their brothers and sisters to utilize their own skills and experience to identify and eliminate workplace hazards. In the last three years alone, nearly 5,000 UWUA members have participated in our Systems of Safety program; and

WHEREAS, SOS is effective. With the help of the union's safety training program, the Michigan State Utility Workers Council (MSUWC) members at Consumers Energy saw annual safety incidents dropped from 558 to 73. After implementing an SOS program at UWUA Local 1-2 for New York's ConEd workers, operating errors were reduced by 47 percent and preventable motor vehicle accidents by 40 percent over five years; and

WHEREAS, To better coordinate and share information, the UWUA created five regional and one national safety committee, comprised of safety officers from each region and industry. Committee members receive safety leadership training through P4A and work together regularly to discuss best practices, major events and emerging threats. The Committees are an important resource for all UWUA locals and members. UWUA Safety Officers have played a key role in ensuring safe procedures and practices by coordinating multiple local union response efforts to natural and man-made disasters; and

WHEREAS, The AFL-CIO has established April 28th as Workers' Memorial Day to remember those who have died on the job. April 28th also serves as a day to educate the general public and is increasingly recognized by unions around the world.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The UWUA opposes any corporate, administrative or legislative efforts to weaken occupational health and safety laws, regulations, and enforcement. We condemn the rollback of hard fought OSHA regulations. We will work for passage of legislation to better protect worker rights and worker safety, including "Protecting America's Workers Act," federal legislation that would extend OSHA protections to all public employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, UWUA members must work to build a culture of safety at every level of our union. We have been particularly successful in creating safer working conditions for our members working in the water industry, a sector that had lacked a long tradition of health and safety awareness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Every UWUA local union is urged to form a safety and health committee and to, wherever possible, hire a full-time safety officer. Local union leaders and members are also encouraged to participate in health and safety conferences and forums. National resources, including training and technical support are available to any local seeking to improve worker safety, whether day-to-day or during emergency situations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Better union-wide coordination and information sharing will help us to save more

lives and avoid more injuries. Local unions are urged to record the OSHA 300A Health and Safety summaries posted by employers annually and to share the information with the National Union. Tracking this information will provide us with the information needed to assess patterns of hazards as well as identify new ones, such as the dangers associated with understaffing and contracting. This data can be useful in winning stronger language at the bargaining table and through state regulatory proceedings; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, UWUA members are encouraged to participate in local Workers’ Memorial Day events. We will work for greater recognition of April 28th as a day to remember our lost sisters and brothers, and to rededicate ourselves to fight for the living.