

News Release

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WASHINGTON, DC. — A group of widows, parents, children and other family members of victims of workplace fatalities announced a campaign to work for a “Family Bill of Rights” to provide fundamental rights to the loved ones left behind by fatal workplace injuries and illnesses.

“No one can bring back those we’ve lost, but if we can help other family members in similar situations, it makes our pain a little less,” said Tammy Miser of Lexington, Kentucky, who lost her brother, Shawn Boone, 33, in an explosion at the Hayes Lemmerz plant in Huntington, Indiana in October 2003. “When a worker is killed on the job, the system gives special rights and responsibilities to the company and the government, but family members are left completely out of the equation.” Miser founded United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities (USMWF) after her brother’s death, and the organization’s members drafted the Bill.

“The world of OSHA and workers’ compensation were completely foreign to us until my Dad died on the job,” said Melissa King of Malden, Mass. “Now we know first-hand how difficult it is for family members to obtain basic information about workplace incidents.” Melissa King’s father, Paul King, 50, was electrocuted while working at Boston’s Logan airport.

Through USMWF and the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (formerly National COSH Network) family members are building a network of support to assist anyone touched by a work-related fatalities, injuries or illnesses. The “Family Bill of Rights” evolved after sharing their grief as well as their traumatic experiences dealing with government agencies, workers’ compensation officials and attorneys.

The “Family Bill of Rights” outlines ten simple rights that should be afforded those left behind when a worker dies on the job. To ensure those rights, the Bill sets forth responsibilities for officials, including:

- Providing family members with information on the role of federal, state and other officials in investigating the death;
- Notifying family members of all meetings, hearings and other communication between investigators and the employer (or their representative), and allowing a family member the opportunity to participate in such events;
- Allowing family members the right to view all physical evidence gathered as part of the accident investigation, and ensuring that the evidence is secured from employer tampering; and
- Involving family members in the investigation process, such as allowing family members an opportunity to offer names of individuals who may have useful evidence for the investigators.

The family members are in Washington, DC to attend the COSH Activists’ Summit and the Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association. They are available for interviews through the contacts listed above. A copy of the “Family Bill of Rights” is available at: (list website: http://www.usmwf.org/family_packet.htm)