

ID # 0036

Unions and safety in the workplace has always been a matter of importance in the eyes of laborers all working towards the same goal. "Where trade unions are most firmly organized, there are the rights of the people most respected"- Samuel Gompers. Unions enable workers to have "a voice on the job" (<http://www.aflcio.org>). on many different issues in the workplace such as benefits, wages, health, and especially safety. Without unions, maintaining a safe and healthy work environment would be very difficult to accomplish. Throughout the years unions have continued to uphold a noteworthy reputation for establishing safety regulations and responsibilities between workers and their employers.

In the past before unions were even brought to the surface, many laborers suffered under long hours and hazardous working conditions. It was not until the Eisenhower administration that an official formation of organized labor under the AFL-CIO was recognized. (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index>). Ever since, workers in production and maintenance fields, such as the steel industry, now are granted eight-hour workdays, protective equipment, and job safety analysis. Also, dangerous jobs once done by hand are now done by machines and old equipment is replaced with new, efficient technology. Not only has safety increased in the workplace, but also productivity as a result. (<http://www.uswa.org/>).

Recently, there have been many safety conferences for steelworkers provided by unions as well which try to enrich understanding of the dangers of the workplace and raise the awareness of how potentially deadly steel mills can be. (<http://www.usw.org/results?q=safety>). A steelworker in my family told me how helpful these mandatory conferences were, especially because of how many years they have worked there. Over the years, many workers lose a sense of conscientiousness simply due to the fact that dangerous tasks in the steel mill are every day

occurrences. But a small instance of negligence can put an end to one's life: therefore awareness is key. Instead of having workers to perform hazardous jobs, workers can now decide whether a task is too dangerous to act upon, thanks to the support from unions.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "each year approximately 6,000 employees in the country die from workplace injuries while another 50,000 die from illnesses caused by exposure to workplace hazards." (<http://legacy.usw.org/usw/program/adminlinks>). This be true, what else can unions do to support the safety of their employees in the workplace? More often, unions encourage the use of respirators in hazardous areas along with personal protective equipment and inspection of the workplace for proper and safe services by OSHA (<http://aflcio.org/issues/safety/>). With the guidance from unions, workers get the safe atmosphere they deserve as they risk their lives for their job every day.

Based on my own research and opinion, I believe unions have most definitely increase safe practices in the workplace, and without them many workers would fall victim to even more deaths and unfair conditions. "A voice on the job" is the reason why concerns of the people are even heard. Hence, unions provide a more democratic atmosphere rather than an authoritarian place of work. Input from both areas of the spectrum facilitates the safest facilities, the most production possible, along with an understanding of necessities in the workplace.