

« [PAWA Could Help To Extend Whistleblowers' Rights](#)
[Tammy Miser Won't Be Stopped, Part 2](#) »

Tammy Miser Won't Be Stopped, Part 1

Tammy Miser won't be stopped. In 2003 her brother, Shawn Boone, was [killed after an aluminum dust explosion caused 90% of his body to be burned](#). He suffered this fatal injury while working as a maintenance worker for Hayes Lemmerz International. After his death, Miser couldn't even find out what the fire department report concerning her brother's accident said.

"I was just frustrated with everything," Miser says. "When I contacted the fire department for their report, it had what my brother had stated blacked out, and I felt like we had every right to have that information... They said we wouldn't want to know, but they were his last words, who wouldn't want to know? That should be our decision."

And so she got to work, trying to piece together the accident, and her rights as Boone's sister in her time of grieving.

"Once I got over the feeling sorry for me part, I started compiling information," Miser says. "Anything I could find, anything I could learn, and it was really tedious."

Throughout the process Miser began to learn how difficult it can be the families of employees killed on the job to find out anything about the accident that took the life of their loved one. Companies can make it difficult in order to protect themselves from liability, law enforcement can make it difficult by restricting access to reports, and at times it can seem like there is almost no communication from OSHA.

Because she was so close to the process, Miser began to think about all the things that needed to change to help families get the information they needed, and help prevent others from going through what she suffered after the loss of her brother. So, Miser founded The United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities. From the organization's website:

"Families who have a loss need to be acknowledged. We will not allow others to discount us any longer. We are the brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and children of America. Families and their losses are not a number or a statistic. Our lost loved ones were the very ones making your profit. We are not asking for more than we are entitled to, Our Right, The Right to a Safe and Healthful Workplace. We need leaders to restore our faith in governmental humanity."

Miser wanted to create a place where grieving families could find the support they need in the aftermath of their loved-one's death. "Originally," Miser says, "I thought it'd be more of a group

for counseling, because I really hate politics.” But it quickly became much bigger than that. At first it was just Miser. “I had two volunteer jobs, plus a cleaning business, and I was doing [work for USMWF],” Miser says. “And I did that for 5 years. Me and a few individuals who really helped me out. They helped guide me in the direction I needed to be guided.”

Since then, the organization has grown. Miser works for the organization full-time now, with the help of a part-time employee. In addition, there is a network of 25-30 volunteers nationwide, all working through crises as unique as the places they live.

Together, they’ve managed to build quite the collection of resources accessible through the organization’s website (www.USMWF.org). There are recommended attorneys, condolence letters for sending to friends or families who’ve lost a loved one, and a copy of a Family Bill of Rights, drafted by the USMWF. There are also guides on how to make public statements and fill out a Freedom of Information Act request. And that’s only the beginning. Miser and her team are developing a fuller resource guide for families as well as training for those that have lost loved ones.

Through it all, Miser soldiers on, championing the families’ rights and trying to pressure Congress to put some of these rights into law.

“It’s really rough work,” Miser says, “but it is so rewarding.”

(Tomorrow – Miser and the Protecting America’s Workers Act)