



Principles for Responsible Mining

It is the goal of the United Steelworkers (USW) to incentivize and expand the use of responsibly-produced minerals and materials, and to anchor supply chains in North America. As one of the founding members of the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) and the largest mining union in North America, USW is at the forefront of helping to ensure that mines develop, operate, and close in a way that is fair to workers and their communities. Companies and workers alike benefit from a unionized mine by having working conditions and standards set out in a collective-bargaining agreement (union contract), cooperating to develop workforce training programs, and complying with environmental standards.

Critical minerals and materials are of significant strategic importance for energy, national defense, transportation, communications, and other technology. Global demand for these materials far exceeds current production levels, which necessitates new mining, processing, and recycling capacity. USW believes these materials can be extracted and processed in a way that impacts the environment the least and helps surrounding communities the most when they are extracted and processed in North America, under Canadian and U.S. laws and regulations.

Responsible Mining

In Canada and the U.S., we have the opportunity to extract and process needed materials in a way that upholds workers' rights and safeguards the environment as much as possible. In order to realize these goals, mining companies must follow responsible practices, including:

- Shared economic benefit with workers and communities
- Respect for worker and community safety
- Thoughtful stakeholder engagement, including with Indigenous peoples
- Environmental protections that minimize impact
- Business integrity that looks to the future

There are many models to ensure responsible mining, most importantly negotiating and enforcing a union contract. There are also benefits agreements with Indigenous groups; global standards developed by IRMA; good neighbor agreements with communities; and government policy. The USW has been active in these groups, coalitions, and negotiations. Where possible, the USW has and will continue to work with key stakeholders to develop responsible mining projects in North America.

Examples:

Shared economic benefit with workers and communities. For example,

- Respecting miners' rights to organize and collectively bargain;
- Training and hiring workers from the local community;
- Avoiding third-party contractors by using trained company employees;
- Paying fair wages with good benefits;
- Investing in local infrastructure and using local suppliers;
- Rejecting forced labor, child labor, and other human rights violations;
- Promoting diversity in the work force by hiring and addressing the unique needs of all workers; and
- Payment of reasonable royalties to assist all levels of government in offsetting expenses and in abandoned mine reclamation.

Respect for worker and community safety. For example,

- Developing a comprehensive safety program that includes active labor/management dialogue;
- Exceeding the minimum safety requirements in the law;
- Ensuring worker-chosen representatives have a meaningful role in health and safety;
- Preventing discipline or discrimination against workers for health and safety actions;
- Staffing at levels sufficient to safely carry out the work; and
- Developing comprehensive emergency response plans.

Robust stakeholder engagement, including with Indigenous peoples. For example,

- Building respectful, meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities on whose lands miners live and work;
- Working with communities to address environmental concerns and community impact from permitting through operations and closure;
- Developing impact benefit agreements;
- Working with Indigenous and other host communities to identify training, skills development, and employment opportunities; and
- Proper life-of-mine planning with strong consideration given to worker and community maximized benefits.

Environmental protections that minimize impact. For example,

- Where reasonable and possible, exceeding environmental laws, including for air and water quality;
- Regular air, dust, water, seismic, and wildlife monitoring;
- Developing plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from mine operations;
- Conducting environment impact analysis during permitting, and preventing unreasonable delays through repeat analysis and litigation;
- Ensuring properly engineered and constructed tailings dams that are regularly inspected; and
- Mandatory, planned reclamation and waste management with funding set aside to carry out the activities.

Business integrity that looks to the future. For example,

- Adoption of new technology and processes (such as automation and AI) that prioritizes workers' training, health and safety, and input;
- Compliance with all permits and payment of taxes;
- Transparency of economic and environmental data for operations, supply chains, and customers;
- Investment in innovation to promote new methods for maximum mineral extraction while minimizing impact; and
- Strong commitments to worker and job security.