



Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

January 14, 2025

The Honorable Douglas L. Parker  
Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health  
Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave. NW,  
Washington, DC 20210

**Re: Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings**  
**Docket No. OSHA-2021-0009**

Assistant Secretary Parker:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I am pleased to respond to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) notice of proposed rulemaking to issue a new safety and health standard, titled Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings. TTD consists of 37 affiliate unions who represent workers across all modes of transportation.<sup>1</sup> We applaud OSHA for taking this important step towards addressing the impacts of extreme temperatures on America's workforce. All workers should be guaranteed necessary protections to mitigate the risks of heat injury and illness.

As the nation's largest transportation labor federation, the impact of extreme temperatures is notable across every industry that TTD represents. In the building trades, workers are exposed to harsh weather conditions on construction sites and other outdoor job sites. In the aviation sector, unregulated cabin temperatures negatively impact passengers and crew. Moreover, ground service and ramp workers, along with other airport service workers, are routinely subjected to extreme temperatures emphasizing the critical need for adequate heat protection measures. In the railroad industry, rail workers not only toil outside in extreme heat but routinely operate locomotives without functional air conditioning units. Transit workers, who keep buses and passenger trains moving during record-hot summers, must also be mindful of the dangers of extreme temperatures. Longshore workers labor outside at ports across the country and our nation's dedicated seafarers and merchant mariners endure all kinds of weather while they are on vessels out at sea, often for months at a time. Letter carriers are also impacted by extreme temperatures, with many city letter carriers required to deliver mail on foot despite harsh weather conditions. Furthermore, the majority of US Postal Service (USPS) mail trucks do not have air conditioning, meaning that postal workers delivering mail via truck are often required to do so in stifling temperatures.

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<sup>1</sup> Attached is a complete list of the unions affiliated with TTD.

Manufacturing workers endure extreme temperatures in facilities producing essential products for our nation's infrastructure, such as steel, chemicals, tires, and many more. Amidst such harsh conditions, their productivity, and more importantly, their well-being are significantly compromised, underscoring the urgent need for improved standards.

The undeniable reality is that too many workers, including transportation workers, are dying on the job as a result of extreme heat. We have previously called upon OSHA to codify a federal heat protection standard that would ensure adequate rest breaks, access to hydration and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), and comprehensive training on recognizing and addressing signs of dehydration, heatstroke, and other heat-related conditions.<sup>2</sup> We are encouraged to see that OSHA's proposed rule incorporates many of these important provisions.

TTD agrees with OSHA's proposed initial heat and high heat triggers and finds these thresholds to be adequate indicators of heat risk to indoor and outdoor workers. We further support the requirements outlined in paragraphs (e) and (f) of the NPRM. As OSHA explains in the preamble accompanying its proposed rule, the controls outlined in paragraphs (e) and (f) are accepted by the scientific and academic communities as being effective safeguards against heat injury and illness.

We must highlight, however, the exemption for workers whose work activities are performed in indoor work areas or vehicles where air conditioning consistently keeps the ambient air temperature below 80 °F. While this exemption appears reasonable on its surface, it fails to adequately address unreliable vehicle air conditioning. This oversight may result in workers covered by an exemption working in unsafe heat conditions. For example, members represented by TTD affiliates, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Rail, Air, and Transportation Workers-Transportation Division (SMART-TD) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), have reported frequent malfunctions and outages of air conditioning equipment in locomotive cabs. The final rule must specify that vehicle conditions, along with indoor ambient air temperature, must be regularly monitored by employers so the heat protections included in the rule are universally applied when heat triggers are reached. OSHA must hold employers, including railroads, accountable for ensuring that air conditioning remains operational, vehicle temperatures are monitored, and workers do not fall through the cracks left by this exemption.

To address potential non-compliance with the requirements proposed in this rule, we encourage OSHA to ensure workers can report these issues to the agency and reports are quickly addressed. We further recommend that OSHA take steps to make workers aware of this reporting feature and prevent employers from retaliating against employees who make reports. Similarly, we strongly support a robust enforcement framework.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ttd.org/policy/policy-statements/transportation-labor-calls-for-worker-protections-against-extreme-temperatures/>

We welcome OSHA's efforts to mitigate the effects of extreme temperatures on the transportation workforce and respectfully request that the agency take our feedback on this important rule into consideration. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this matter and look forward to working with OSHA in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Regan", written over a circular stamp or mark.

Greg Regan  
President