

Faith in Action: Supporting the OSHA Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Rule

Background

Extreme heat conditions are becoming increasingly common. Just this past July, the Earth saw its two hottest days on record, and 2024 is predicted to be the [hottest year ever](#) due to climate change and our pollution of God's planet with climate-warming gasses. Rising temperatures threaten biodiversity, air and water quality, sea-levels, and more - they also pose a significant danger to human health.

Between [5 million and 10 million](#) American workers are exposed to outdoor heat beyond safe levels annually. Exposure to extreme heat puts workers at risk of illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke; burns or falls from dehydration and dizziness; and exacerbation of existing conditions such as asthma, kidney disease, and heart disease. As extreme weather events and high temperature days increase, workers need protection.

In August, the U.S Department of Labor announced a proposed rule - the [Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Indoor and Outdoor Work Settings Rule](#) - that would "more clearly set employer obligations and the measures necessary to effectively protect employees from hazardous heat." [The rule requires employers](#) to create plans to evaluate and respond to heat-related hazards in their workplace, mandating actions such as: rest breaks with cooling measures, providing drinking water, and training for signs of heat-related illnesses.

Protecting the Dignity of Workers

Our shared faith emphasizes the dignity and sacredness of the human person. Throughout sacred scripture, we are also reminded of the dignity and value in work. The book of Genesis shows us that work is one of the original conditions of humanity - labor is a virtuous deed. We must both provide individuals the opportunity for meaningful work and just wages, and ensure that the dignity and wellbeing of the person is protected within their work.

"Whoever lightens the work of his workers will have the reward on his scales"

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), [Source](#)

Our faith also calls us to take special care of those who are most vulnerable. The workers who are most likely to be exposed to extreme heat - and most unlikely to be protected - are those who have the fewest resources to avoid dangerous job exposures. They are disproportionately low-wage earners, people of color, and immigrants.

"The basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person"

St. Pope John Paul II, [Laborem Exercens, no.6](#)

Take Action

Communities of faith across the country need to show the Biden Administration that there is robust support for the proposed OSHA rule - your voices matter! The Labor Department is accepting comments on the rule through December. The deadline for our actions below is **December 18, 2024**.

Individuals and Faith Leaders: To submit a comment, complete [this form](#).

Organizations and Congregations: Sign on to this [organizational comment](#).

Additional Resources

- [White House Fact Sheet](#): Actions to Protect Workers and Communities from Extreme Weather
- [2024-2030 National Heat Strategy](#)
- [CAP Report](#): Extreme Heat is More Dangerous for Workers Every Year