

THE HEAT IS ON

EXTREME HEAT FACT SHEET

Recently a UPS driver went viral for baking cookies on the dashboard of his delivery truck on video. Driving in a heat wave, without air-conditioning, had turned the inside of the truck into a literal oven.

Are you feeling the heat too? The climate crisis isn't something that will happen in the far away future - it is happening right here, right now. Temperatures in Ontario are rising, and they will only get hotter: 3 to 8 degrees Celsius over the next century. It sounds incremental, but can have lasting, fatal impacts on workers and communities.

- | Kim Douglas Warner, 44, died working at Weston Bakeries in Barrie in 2001. Kim worked a 12-hour day shift in 49-degree heat, on a 34-degree heat day. His temperature reached 42.5 C when he was found unconscious near the ovens.
- | Jean-Jacques Wapistan Jr., a faller working outdoors in Quebec for a construction company, died of heatstroke in August 2021. It was his third day on the job.
- | Esteban Chavez Jr. collapsed in the back of his UPS work truck and died at 24 years old in June 2022 because the employer does not provide air conditioning.

All preventable deaths.

Extreme heat that injures, sickens, and even kills workers is caused by work and climate conditions. And workers of colour are bearing the brunt. [In the U.S. since 2010, Latinx workers have accounted for a third of all heat fatalities](#) - attributed to overrepresentation in industries vulnerable to dangerous heat. Young workers and those in jobs with high physical demands are also more likely to be injured on hot days, or after an oppressively hot night. In fact, an [Australian study](#) showed that for every 1 Celsius degree increase in temperature, younger workers were 1% more likely to be injured.

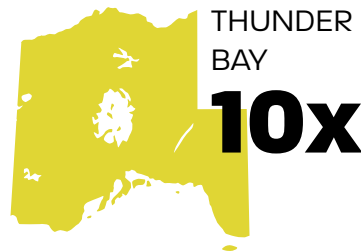


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Precarious work is inseparable from the climate crisis, and temperatures are rapidly rising. By the 2050s, Toronto will have almost 5x the number of heat waves it did last century; Thunder Bay, 10x as many, Kingston 9x as many.

We need to make Ontario workplaces safer to protect workers from a growing threat.

By the 2050s, here's how many more heatwaves the following cities will have compared to the last century:



HOW ARE OTHER COUNTRIES RESPONDING?

Workers in other countries are making the connection between extreme workplace heat and the climate crisis, and the push for legislative change is growing worldwide. Ontario's government can't look away.

When streetsweeper [José Antonio González collapsed and died](#) sweeping Madrid streets in 40 degree celsius heat, his death incited a call for protecting the most vulnerable workers from climate crisis-driven heat waves. In the UK, unions are demanding the government pass laws stating the maximum heat in a workplace. In a recent heat wave, the French government reminded employers that they have obligations to protect workers, including providing drinking water, ventilation, and changing work arrangements.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission stated that extreme heat waves are a human rights issue that continues to disproportionately impact groups protected under the Human Rights Code, such as those with disabilities, older people and low-income, Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities. For example, we have heard reports of [residents "sweating to death"](#) in private long-term care homes without air-conditioning.

WHAT PROTECTIONS FROM EXTREME HEAT DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

The Ontario government has not done enough to protect workers from the rising heat. While regulations exist for how cold a workplace can be in industrial settings (minimum of 18 degrees Celsius), the Occupational Health and Safety Act does not include a ceiling for hot temperatures.

The Ministry provides a guideline on working in extreme temperature conditions and a fact sheet on Heat Stress, which recommends that employers with process heat (e.g. bakeries and smelters) create a heat stress control plan, and follows the threshold limit values (TLVs) for heat set by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH).

At the end of the day, the Ministry has the power to enforce the TLVs in any workplace under the Act's general duty clause to take every reasonable precaution to protect workers [25(2)(h)].

TLV thresholds for heat stress are measured using the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) Index, which requires the use of an expensive meter and a complex interpretation algorithm. A more accessible method is the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)'s Humidex Heat Stress Response Plan and Heat Stress Awareness Guide for employers, joint committees and Ministry inspectors to both assess and prevent heat stress, based on Humidex levels.

WHAT DO WORKERS NEED?

We need legislation for all workers for both heat and cool limits in the workplace - and genuine policy response to the climate crisis by municipal, provincial and federal governments. Heat stress will only intensify more as our planet heats up, creating a workplace crisis within a climate crisis. Both have the same root cause - corporate greed that puts profits above the health of our planet and its people.

Education workers and students often suffer stifling heat in portables. Restaurant workers sweat it out in brutally hot kitchens. Migrant farm workers toil in the blistering sun with few protections. The effects of a warming climate on workers go beyond heat exposure. Outdoor workers will be at greater risk of skin cancer, insect-borne viruses, and air pollution, all looming impacts of the climate crisis.

The heat is on, in Ontario, and our governments must put people before profit. We're past the point of calling every worker killed by the climate crisis a "wake up call". We need action now.

Sign our petition for climate action on workplace heat and join our campaign! You can share your experience with us here.

For more information on heat stress:

- I UFCW's [Heat Stress guideline](#)
- I The Workers Health and Safety Centre [resource line](#)

Our campaign is a joint effort with Providence Centre for Justice, Peace And Integrity of Creation. A special thank you to Athena Choo-Ket-Loung-Murray, Queen's university undergraduate student and Jeremy Milloy, Lead, Integrity of Creation and Climate Change.

**JOIN OUR
CAMPAIGN!**

Sign the petition

