

NEW DAY AT USPS



NEWS FOR USPS WORKERS, BY USPS WORKERS!

UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE SUMMER

Summer is supposed to be the slow season at the United States Postal Service. Management will tell us that volume is down, margins are tighter, and there is less work to do. But anyone who has actually carried mail, worked a window, sorted packages, or worked a tour in a mail processing plant knows better. Summer means walking routes with the sun beating down on us, climbing in and out of mail trucks that can become ovens, and trying to keep moving when the heat makes every task harder. It means clerks and mail handlers sweating through their shifts in hot, poorly ventilated buildings, while management still expects the same pace and the same numbers. We are told to hydrate, take care of ourselves, and work safely, but when safety starts slowing down production, the pressure to keep the mail moving comes right back. This isn't just a problem of bad management or inadequate safety policies. It is a problem rooted in the way our labor is organized. The system depends on our labor, but our health and safety are treated as secondary to keeping that labor productive.

This has proved deadly. Since 2012, at least fifteen postal workers have died from heat-related causes while doing the job. Most recently, on July 20, 2026, 58-year-old letter carrier Umeshkumar Thakkar died while delivering mail in Little Elm, Texas, during an extreme heat warning, with temperatures well above 100 degrees. These are not abstract numbers or unavoidable accidents; they are

postal workers like us who went to work and never made it home. When we are expected to keep the mail moving in conditions that can kill us, we have to ask why keeping the mail moving takes priority over our safety.

Postal Workers in the Production Process:

To get an idea of this, it's important to look at where we fit in the process of adding to the value of everything we move on the job. Postal workers participate in the production process by taking a certain amount of time to perform our labor in the transportation process, facilitating the movement of commodities and capital. We move and sort letters, flats, and packages; we maintain the facilities, machines, and vehicles that facilitate the movement of commodities. This labor time becomes embedded within each of these commodities, and is expressed by an increased value of each commodity. This means that the value of each item we work with is greater once we spend time performing our labor. This production process, our continuous cycle of adding to the value of commodities, must be maintained at all costs in the eyes of the capitalist, unsafe working conditions aside. The owners of capital, owners of corporations and businesses, their executives, other shareholders, etc., and management acting on their behalf are compelled to make decisions that increase their organization's surplus value, which is the portion of the value produced by workers that is taken by capitalists, usually in the form of

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profit.

Increasing Surplus Value, Worsening Conditions:

One of the ways they can maintain and expand their profits is by speeding up production, making their workers produce more in less time. This means increasing the rate at which we perform the labor described above (mail delivery, mail processing, window services, and maintenance). This often leads to workplace injuries and the neglect or bypassing of safety protocols and procedures. For postal workers in the summer, this can take the form of pressure from management to keep their normal pace despite heat warnings and hot warehouse buildings. If workers are slowing down due to unsafe conditions such as heat or smoke, management can decide to bypass safety features on machines (as we've seen during peak season) or instruct workers to continue normal work despite other hazards appearing (overcrowded spaces, messes that need to be cleaned or tidied up, etc.). Basically, these are responses to keep workers at a normal pace and make up for slower speeds by reducing work that keeps the workplace safer.

Capitalists can also choose to spend less on instruments of labor, which are the tools used by workers for production. The less money they have to spend on maintaining safe equipment, the more they can pocket. This can take the form of pushing off machine repairs, not replacing or fixing other broken equipment, or not making necessary improvements to instruments or labor. In the hot season, a notable example of this is upper management's refusal to allow air conditioning to be installed in all postal vehicles. Mail trucks (such as LLV's and FFV's) without AC can get 15-20 degrees hotter inside compared to outside temperatures, which can have dire, even lethal, consequences for carriers. By not investing in improvements to vehicles (and other instruments of labor), USPS is able to maintain their current allocation of resources, which favors third-party contractors and upper management at the expense of rank-and-file postal workers.

Along with these cost-cutting tactics, there are some concessions permitted to get workers to pick up the pace, like granting an extra break or free hydration products. However, these exist to serve the capitalist necessity of keeping the mail flowing at all costs. As long as a carrier or a mail handler doesn't collapse during their tour, costing USPS money by slowing down production and sometimes resulting in medical costs, the company is happy.

Safer Conditions Must Be Fought For:

It's unacceptable that we do not receive the full value of what we produce; postal workers, like all other workers, have every right to demand that their working conditions enable them to comfortably do their jobs. Understanding this does not mean we're "unwilling to work hard" or "entitled" as opponents would suggest: rather, we understand that USPS cannot bring in any revenue or produce any value without the rank-and-file workers who perform each job. With this in mind, we are entitled to more than we receive, whether in wages or working conditions. We can demand hazard pay for work during heat and air-quality warnings and PPE (such as masks). We can refuse to work when management refuses to fix a machine or turns off its safety features, which would essentially mean it is not working properly. We can push for AC in vehicles, because the union bureaucrats certainly haven't been up to the task. More frequent and/or longer breaks, without punishment, can be fought for during times of intense heat or other challenging conditions. The fact that workers experience so much difficulty and danger in hot, summer conditions shows the complete inadequacy of the craft unions that claim to represent us. It's up to the rank-and-file to stand up for each other and build the organizational capacity to present these demands on a local, regional, or country-wide level. The only way to gain the necessary improvements to our working conditions is to utilize the power we have. And we are capable, as postal workers that generate all the value for the company that considers our safety secondary to the flow of capital.