



February 24, 2022

To Oregon Occupational and Health Safety Administration,

My name is Jenny Pool Radway and I am the Executive Director of Causa. Causa works to improve the lives of Latinx immigrants and their families in Oregon through advocacy, coalition building, leadership development, and civic engagement.

At Causa, we support and organize alongside a number of workers who are directly impacted by dangerous heat and smoke conditions, particularly farmworkers across the state. We hear from our communities about how challenging it is for them to work in extreme heat and smoke, but without clear rules in place to protect them, these essential workers are too often exploited by their employers, leading to dangerous conditions and negative health outcomes.

Unfortunately, due to the climate crisis, dangerous heat and smoke conditions are only increasing in our state, and workers are suffering from greater levels of exposure. We were shocked and distressed last year to learn of the death of Sebastian Fransisco Perez, a migrant farmworker who died alone at a farm in St. Paul. We know that immigrant communities, particularly Latinx migrant workers, often bear the brunt of perilous outdoor working conditions, and our communities deserve better.

Therefore, Causa urges you to strengthen protections for Oregon workers from extreme heat and wildfire smoke, and in doing so, specifically urge you to:

1. **FOLLOW THE SCIENCE:** OSHA must adopt rules that are based in sound science and public health expertise. This means adopting science-based temperature thresholds that rely on “heat index” as a measure, and smoke thresholds that follow Air Quality Index health risk levels. Specifically, we urge you to:
 - a. **Maintain** protections from extreme heat that rely on “heat index” as a measure, and are triggered at 80 degrees F, with high heat procedures triggered at 90 degrees F. We also urge you to maintain requirements to provide workers access to shade or alternative cooling measures and an adequate supply of cool drinking water, and additional paid preventative cool-down breaks in the shade.
 - b. **Eliminate** exemptions for certain categories of work: The current draft heat smoke rules exempt “light work” from key protections. This exemption is not based in health/safety research and science. All workers should be provided access to shade and water.
 - c. **Strengthen** the AQI triggers for smoke so that they are consistent with the AQI risk categories; this means: mandatory mask use at AQI 201 – the beginning of “unhealthy for everyone” and fit-tested masks required at AQI 301 – the beginning of the “hazardous” category.

2. **LISTEN TO WORKERS:** OSHA must follow its mandate to protect vulnerable worker communities by ensuring that all affected workers—regardless of workload—are protected.
 - a. **Maintain** requirements that employers must: provide access to shade and water, regular work/rest breaks, heat illness prevention plans and training, and interactive training for supervisors and employees, and observe workers for signs of heat illness or create a mandatory buddy system.
 - b. **Eliminate** the option for employers to decide whether longer work breaks are allowed. Employers are not health and safety experts, and are driven to prioritize their bottom line by maximizing work time and profits by minimizing breaks for workers.
 - c. **Strengthen** requirements to ensure employers have an Emergency Medical Plan in place, so that workers are taken care of when they experience a wildfire smoke-related medical emergency. Without a plan in place, workers will be unnecessarily at risk of not receiving medical care when they have a wildfire smoke-related medical emergency.

3. **ACT WITHOUT DELAY + ENFORCE THE RULES:** It is critical that OSHA adopt strong rules without delay, before the next heat and wildfire season puts more Oregon worker lives at risk from extreme climate impacts. We also urge OSHA to help ensure these standards are effective in protecting workers, by prioritizing strong enforcement of the rules.

Causa envisions an Oregon and a world where all people have access to the resources and protections that they need to thrive. In order to achieve this vision, our state must take leadership on climate and worker justice and ensure that all workers are protected from dangerous heat and smoke conditions. We hope you will listen to the voices of experts and workers from across the state and strengthen Oregon's heat and smoke rules.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jenny Pool Radway
Executive Director
Causa