

Biden administration proposes rule to tackle extreme heat in the workplace

July 2 2024, by Robin Foster



As millions of Americans grapple with blistering heat this summer, the Biden Administration on Tuesday proposed a new rule to address excessive heat in the workplace.

If the first major federal safety standard of its kind becomes final, the [measure](#) would aim to protect an estimated 36 million U.S. workers from injuries related to heat exposure on the job. That includes delivery and [construction workers](#), landscapers and workers in warehouses, factories and kitchens.

"From the record-shattering heat wave across the Midwest and Northeast, to devastating flooding in Iowa and Minnesota, to raging wildfires in New Mexico, Oregon and California, communities in every corner of the country are being directly impacted by the compounding effects of extreme weather," the White House said in a statement announcing the proposal.

"Today, the President is receiving an operational briefing on extreme weather forecasts for this summer, and he will announce new actions to protect workers and families from the impacts of extreme weather."

Under the proposed rule, employers would be required to identify heat dangers, develop emergency response plans related to [heat illness](#) and train employees and supervisors on the signs of heat illnesses. They would also have to provide rest breaks, provide shade and water and allow new workers to build their tolerance for heat on the job.

Penalties for heat-related violations in workplaces would also increase significantly, to come in line with what workplaces are issued for most violations of any Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rule, the Associated Press reported.

An estimated 2,300 Americans died from heat-related illness in 2023, according to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#). Workers with prolonged exposure to [extreme heat](#) are among the most vulnerable to heatstroke and other illnesses, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The U.S. Labor Department has been developing a standard for how workplaces deal with heat since 2021, with OSHA having held meetings last year to hear about how the proposed measures could affect small businesses, the AP reported.

California, Colorado, Oregon, Minnesota and Washington are the only states with [workplace](#) standards for heat exposure, while Florida and Texas have both passed legislation preventing [local governments](#) from requiring heat protections for outdoor workers, the AP reported.

If finalized, the Biden administration's rule would override any state measures, and states with procedures to deal with heat would have to put measures in place that are at least as stringent as the federal rule.

More information: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has more on [extreme heat in the workplace](#).

© 2024 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Biden administration proposes rule to tackle extreme heat in the workplace (2024, July 2) retrieved 2 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-07-biden-administration-tackle-extreme-workplace.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.