

# Stop killing workers with heat!

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Guatemalan-born farmworker Sebastian Francisco Perez, 38, died during the heat wave while moving field irrigation lines in St. Paul, Oregon.

There's nothing natural about the heat waves and massive forest fires scorching the earth. [Capitalist climate change](#) is unnatural.

Record high temperatures in the western United States and Canada are matched by temperatures of 100 degrees Fahrenheit in Siberia.

Yet millions of workers are forced to work in these dangerous conditions. Among them was [Oregon farmworker, Sebastian Francisco Perez](#), who collapsed and died on June 26, one day after his 38th birthday. He had been working in temperatures above 100 F.

Sebastian Perez came from the Guatemalan town of Ixcan to put food on our tables. Bigots want us to hate immigrants who are the majority of farmworkers.

California farmworkers have to work in 114-degree heat. The Golden State is one of only four states that have any regulations to protect workers from heatstroke. The other states are Minnesota, Washington and Oregon.

California requires bosses to provide workers with one quart of fresh water every hour. That didn't prevent [Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez from dying](#) in 95-degree heat in 2008. The 17-year-old was working on the grape harvest.

### **No heat safety regulations**

Forty-six states don't have any regulations to protect workers from heat death and injury. Neither does the federal government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

That's despite the Center for Disease Control's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health requesting OSHA to do so in 1975. That was 46 years and nine U.S. presidents ago.

Government figures show 815 workers dying from heat between 1992 and 2017. Over 70,000 were injured. The real numbers are far higher.

Construction workers accounted for [36% of these heat deaths](#), six times their percentage of the workforce. But it isn't just workers who work outside who can die.

Millions of warehouse workers also suffer from extreme heat. During a 2011 heat wave, Amazon workers at the Breinigsville distribution center near Allentown, Pa., were pushed to meet production quotas.

Instead of opening loading dock doors to help ventilate the facility, supervisors kept them locked because they were worried about theft. Employee health was less important.

Amazon instead [stationed ambulances outside with paramedics](#) who would whisk away workers who had collapsed from the heat.

### **Organize against death**

There's nothing new about the rich driving workers to death in hot weather. Enslaved Africans had to work from "no see" in the morning to "no see" at night no matter what the weather was.

The reason why OSHA hasn't been allowed to issue any rules to protect workers from extreme heat is that it would cut into capitalists' profits. Treating Amazon workers humanely could cost Amazon big boss Jeff Bezos some of his \$200 billion stash. He might not be able to go on a space rocket again.

Even if the feds issued safety rules to protect workers from heat death and injury, who's going to enforce them? In 2019 there was only one full-time OSHA employee per 88,977 workers. Most workplaces [never see an OSHA inspector](#) for years.

Fox News wants us to get mad at anyone calling to defund the trigger-happy, club-swinging, choke-holding police. OSHA and other safety agencies have been defunded for years.

In 2016, New York City [cops issued 90,600 summons](#) to people for allegedly slaking their thirst with a cold beer or some other liquid refreshment. How about some “law and order” to keep capitalists from cooking workers to death?

Unions are what will really protect workers at Amazon and every business from injury and death. It’s only unions that will prevent workers from being fired for refusing to work in dangerous conditions.

Working and poor people die from the heat off the job, too. At least 739 people died from a [1995 heat wave in Chicago](#).

Workers can die on the job just because they’re not able to cool themselves during the night. Children and seniors are the greatest victims of heat waves like the one in Chicago.

With capitalism cooking the earth, air conditioning is more than ever a human right. Millions of families need free air conditioners and cheap electricity to operate them.

If the people are willing to fight for it, it can be won.



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2021/08/14/stop-killing-workers-with-heat/>