

Stefi Weisburd

I don't function well in the heat. It can make me feel sick - exhausted, weak and lightheaded, often triggering a migraine. I don't think as clearly. My ankles swell. I am very lucky that I do not have to work in a hot environment. Yet we all depend on people who do - delivery drivers, farmworkers, neighborhood police, firefighters, construction workers, oil and gas workers, utility linesmen, and people who work in foundries, bakeries, and warehouses, to name a few. Like all New Mexicans, these people deserve basic protections from hazards. Heat, which is growing more extreme, is no exception. Requiring heat training, available water and bathrooms, shade, rest breaks and acclimatization seems like common sense bottom-line precautions for preventing illness, injury, loss of productivity and absenteeism. It also lessens the burden on taxpayer-funded healthcare and emergency services.

Heat stress is known to trigger irritability and aggressive behavior by affecting cognitive processes and neurotransmitter activity. Not protecting workers threatens both them and public safety. For example, add extreme heat to the arduous working environment in the Permian and already disproportionate oil industry injuries and fatalities are sure to rise. But so will the already record high car accident rates in the surrounding communities, not to mention other cascading impacts like domestic violence.

With the Federal government antagonistic to heat standards, you have moral opportunity to step in to protect your fellow New Mexicans and especially the people whose work makes all of our lives. I don't function well in the heat. It can make me feel sick - exhausted, weak and lightheaded, often triggering a migraine. I don't think as clearly. My ankles swell. I am very lucky that I do not have to work in a hot environment. Yet we all depend on people who do - delivery drivers, farmworkers, neighborhood police, firefighters, construction workers, oil and gas workers, utility linesmen, and people who work in foundries, bakeries, and warehouses, to name a few. Like all New Mexicans, these people deserve basic protections from hazards, and heat, which is growing more extreme, is no exception. Requiring heat training, available water and bathrooms, shade, rest breaks and acclimatization seems like common sense bottom-line precautions for preventing illness, injury, loss of productivity and absenteeism. It also lessens the burden on taxpayer-funded healthcare and emergency services.

Heat stress is known to trigger irritability and aggressive behavior by affecting cognitive processes and neurotransmitter activity. Not protecting workers threatens both them and public safety. For example, add extreme heat to the arduous working environment in the Permian and already disproportionate oil industry injuries and fatalities are sure to rise. But so will the already record high car accident rates in the surrounding communities, not to mention other cascading impacts like domestic violence.

With the Federal government antagonistic to heat standards, you have moral opportunity to step in to protect your fellow New Mexicans and especially the people whose work makes all of our lives so much easier and healthier.