

American Federation of Teachers New Mexico

On behalf of AFT New Mexico, representing public school educators and support staff across New Mexico, we strongly support the New Mexico Environment Department's proposed Heat Illness and Injury Prevention Rule. As climate change drives more extreme heat across our state, this rule is not only timely but essential to protect the health and safety of workers, including those in our public education system.

Our members work in a wide range of school settings, many of which include classrooms, cafeterias, school buses, playgrounds, and maintenance areas that lack adequate cooling or shade. Summer learning programs, extended school years, and early fall heatwaves all contribute to prolonged heat exposure for teachers, educational assistants, custodians, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers. We have seen firsthand how extreme heat impairs judgment, causes fatigue, and places vulnerable employees and students at risk.

The proposed rule addresses these concerns comprehensively, including critical provisions on hydration, cooling areas, monitoring procedures, rest breaks, and training. These are common-sense measures that can prevent serious illness and even save lives. We are particularly encouraged by the requirement that all training and written plans be made accessible in the languages understood by the majority of workers, this promotes true equity and access to safety.

New Mexico's education professionals, like all workers, deserve safe conditions — and this rule is a major step toward ensuring that no one has to choose between their health and their job.