**PUBLIC HEALTH**

**DECISION-MAKERS**
Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Oregon OSHA)

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**WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER**

During summer 2021’s record-shattering heat dome, extreme heat killed more than 100 Oregonians, including a migrant farmworker named Sebastian Fransisco Perez, who died alone while laying irrigation pipes at a farm in St. Paul, Oregon.

Spurred by the death of Fransisco Perez and pressure from the OCAP Coalition, Governor Brown directed Oregon OSHA to adopt emergency temporary rules to protect workers from exposure to excessive heat and wildfire smoke. The rules require simple, common sense protections, like providing access to shade and cold drinking water, increasing the frequency and length of work breaks, and requiring active monitoring for heat illness.

Building on the findings of its OCAP-directed Climate and Health in Oregon 2020 report, OHA has made significant progress to ensure public health systems across Oregon are better equipped to respond to ever-worsening climate impacts. The OCAP Coalition successfully advocated in the 2021 legislative session to secure $60 million for OHA’s Public Health Modernization plan. OHA is now investing these funds to support local and Tribal authorities and community based organizations in fostering public health and community resilience in the face of ever-worsening climate impacts.

In addition, OHA made significant strides in developing a first-of-its-kind study on climate change impacts on youth mental health and depression in Oregon. OHA facilitated robust stakeholder outreach and roundtables with youth communities, making specific efforts to connect with Native and Tribal youth, youth most affected by the wildfires of 2020, and youth from rural, low-income, and communities of color. OHA reported their initial findings at the national level at the American Public Health Association annual conference and with DEQ during the Climate Protection Program.

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**IMPLEMENTATION STATUS**

The OCAP Coalition has continued to push Oregon OSHA to adopt strong permanent protections for workers from heat and smoke. We expect Oregon OSHA to adopt final rules later this Spring, which will be in effect for the 2022 heat and smoke season. These efforts are also making an impact on a national scale, where the Biden Administration and Department of Labor have taken new measures to protect workers from the hazards of extreme heat.

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**KEY DATA**

- **100+** people killed by extreme heat during the Summer 2021 heat dome(s).
- **254** complaints submitted to Oregon OSHA between June 24 and 28th, just for excessive heat exposure.
- **$40 billion** in annual earnings lost by mid-century due to exposure of outdoor workers to extreme heat.
- **$5,359**: average cost of a heat illness-related hospitalization.
Due to the continued need to dedicate resources to fight the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, OHA was delayed in releasing its annual Climate and Health in Oregon report, and its final report on the impacts of climate change on youth mental health and depression in Oregon. Both reports are expected to be published in Spring 2022. The OCAP Coalition is grateful to OHA leadership and its staff for its tireless work to protect Oregonians during this unprecedented time.

“When workers speak out, they’re often met with hostility, sometimes fired for speaking up. It is crucial for the excessive heat rules to have language requiring employers to provide accessible shade and cool, clean water for workers...These two rulemakings will have significant impacts on workers exposed to wildfire smoke and excessive heat.”

– Reyna Lopez, Executive Director, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN).

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS**

Strong enforcement of Oregon OSHA’s forthcoming heat and smoke rules will be key to ensuring that employers are adequately implementing protective measures. The OCAP coalition will continue advocating to ensure that Oregon OSHA takes needed enforcement measures, including retaliation protections for workers who advocate for their rights.

In addition, Oregon OSHA currently does not have the authority to require work stoppages, even in extremely hazardous and life-threatening climate conditions. The legislature must act to ensure that no worker is forced to choose between their health and their paycheck, by:

- Granting authority to Oregon OSHA to prohibit work in certain extreme air quality and temperature conditions;

- Creating a worker relief fund to compensate workers who are unable to work due to climate hazards.

- Providing funding to ensure Oregon OSHA has adequate resources and staff to effectively implement the new heat and smoke rules.

“Little to no shade and no breaks for a long period of time.”

– Anonymous complaint registered to Oregon OSHA alleging that roofing and sheet metal workers on a job site in Klamath Falls were working in triple-digit heat and poor air quality due to wildfire smoke.