

**NEWS RELEASE**

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

NMED petitions for rule on workplace heat protection
Will protect New Mexico workers from heat related illnesses and injuries

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau yesterday submitted a petition to the state's Environmental Improvement Board to adopt a proposed rule on occupational heat illness and injury prevention.

The rule is a critical step in protecting New Mexico workers from exposure to high temperatures while at work.

The New Mexico Environment Department, and the Department's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau, have been actively advocating for worker safety in hot environments for several years through public outreach, presentations to employer associations, worker safety advocacy groups, and climate related non-governmental organizations.

According to the National Weather Service extreme heat is a leading cause of weather-related deaths in the United States. The American southwest, including the state of New Mexico, is among the fastest warming regions of the country.

The New Mexico Department of Health reported there were over 800 heat-related emergency room visits in 2024. Most of the visits were concentrated in the southern and northwest portions of the state, but the impact of heat on workers is dangerous throughout the entire state.

"New Mexico is both hotter and dryer than in years past due to the impacts of climate change," said **Kristy Peck**, acting occupational health and safety bureau chief. "Employers need to protect their employees from the reality of heat-related injuries."

Under the proposed rule, employers are required to take measures to protect workers from heat-related illness and injury. These measures include:

- Taking time to acclimate to hot environments.
- Providing access to clean, cool drinking water throughout the workday.
- Mandating frequent rest periods in the shade.

These simple actions prevent harm to employees working in high temperature settings.

The rule protects the health of workers and safeguards our rapidly growing economy. Those working within our growing industries, such as construction, energy infrastructure, extractive industries, film and television, and outdoor recreation, are among the most at risk for heat-related illnesses and injuries. The rule will make sure they can safely continue their work.

If the rule is adopted by the state's Environmental Improvement Board, New Mexico would join five other states — California, Nevada, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington — in protecting its workers from the dangers of heat amid a warming climate.

The Environmental Improvement Board is independent of the New Mexico Environment Department. It adopts and promulgates nearly all regulations administered by the Environment Department. The board was established under state law and consists of seven members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the New Mexico State Senate.

Environment Department Occupational Health and Safety Bureau submission of the petition to the Environmental Improvement Board is the first step to start the rulemaking process. The petition requests a two-day hearing before the board in June of this year. When the Environmental Improvement Board adopts the rule, it will take effect in July 2025.

The next step is for the Occupational Health and Safety Bureau to open comment on the rule for 60 days in April and May of 2025. All public comments received during the comment period will be evaluated and responded to as appropriate by the New Mexico Environment Department prior to submission of the final rule to the Environmental Improvement Board before the hearing date. A copy of the draft rule is available [here](#) for review.

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