

# Amid record temperatures, UPS delivery drivers still without air conditioning

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*Work at UPS? Tell us how the heat is affecting you this summer. All submissions will be kept anonymous.*

Tens of thousands of UPS delivery drivers in the United States are being left to face record summer temperatures without air conditioning in their vehicles. This comes months after a new sellout contract at the company, which the Teamsters bureaucrats misleadingly claimed provided air conditioning for drivers. The contract is also being used to lay off thousands and close or automate hundreds of the company's warehouses.

A report last month on CNN's website carried the headline, "UPS promised new delivery vans with AC. It hasn't bought any... Almost none of the nearly 100,000 brown package vans have AC. Temperatures inside the trucks, both the cab and especially the cargo space where drivers need to go to fetch and drop off packages, can regularly get well over 120 degrees [49 degrees Celsius], according to the Teamsters union."

So far, only about two-thirds of UPS's 100,000 delivery vans have been retrofitted with fans, heat shields and scoop air intakes, which can reduce the temperature of the cargo area by about 17 degrees.

This underscores the fact that the new contract was pushed through with lies by the Teamsters bureaucracy, which violated a strike mandate and its own insincere pledge to call a national strike by July 31 without a new deal.

The supposed addition of air conditioning was one of the Teamsters' main selling points for the contract. But as the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee explained last year, "the deal on vehicle air conditioning applies only to new vehicles, meaning drivers on older trucks will be without AC for decades." This is exactly what is happening.

The contract does not even claim to provide air

conditioning for workers in UPS warehouses, which are also sweltering during the summer months.

UPS has stated that, "We will continue to purchase and deploy new vehicles with AC as quickly as possible." However, out of 100,000 delivery vehicles at their disposal, roughly 6,000 of them are currently equipped with AC.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), "When the HI [Heat Index] is 80°F [27 degrees Celsius] or higher, serious occupational heat-related illnesses and injuries become more frequent, especially in workplaces where unacclimatized workers are performing strenuous work. When the heat index reaches 95 degrees or higher, the risks associated with heat-related illnesses and injuries become even more profound."

The refusal to provide such basic protections for delivery drivers has tragic consequences every year, with workers suffering heat stroke and even dying. Last August, shortly after the new contract was ratified, delivery driver Christopher Begley died while making deliveries in 101 degree (38 degrees Celsius) heat.

The Teamsters responded to the report with dishonest finger-wagging designed to deflect from its own role in "negotiating" such toothless language. "We are midway into the summer, and frankly UPS is not moving fast enough."

The contract leaves the pace of new vehicle purchase entirely up to the company. According to UPS themselves, the company's decision to purchase new vans is based on package volume and its need to replace its existing fleet. The company has stated that there is no need to make new purchases so far this year.

The Teamsters have maintained a guilty silence while UPS uses the contract to carry out a jobs bloodbath. More than 12,000 layoffs have already been announced

this year, and the company has pledged to close more than 200 facilities and automated “everything” through its “Network of the Future” initiative.

The demand for a safe workplace, free from all environmental hazards, is not a fight that can be initiated by the Teamsters bureaucracy. Instead, this fight must be waged by the rank and file themselves against the apparatus, and in alliance with other workers facing similar dangerous working conditions in various industries such as postal, auto, dock and logistics workers.



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