# Congressional bill aims to protect workers in extreme heat

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Last July, U.S. Postal Service carrier [Peggy Frank was found dead](https://www.dailynews.com/2018/07/09/us-postal-worker-found-dead-in-woodland-hills-amid-record-breaking-heat/) after overheating in her mail truck in Woodland Hills. On that record-breaking 117-degree day, the 63-year-old North Hills resident [died on July 6 of hyperthermia](https://www.dailynews.com/2018/09/24/woodland-hills-mail-carrier-died-primarily-of-overheating-on-117-degree-day-coroners-official-says/), or abnormally high body temperature caused by a failure of the body to deal with the heat coming from the environment.

Following her death, the Occupational Safety and Hazards Administration [launched an investigation](https://www.dailynews.com/2018/07/10/federal-investigators-launch-probe-after-mail-carrier-found-dead-in-woodland-hills/) into her death, ultimately [citing the U.S. Postal Service for violations](https://www.dailynews.com/2019/01/10/u-s-postal-service-cited-nearly-150000-after-heat-related-death-of-woodland-hills-mail-carrier/) totaling nearly $150,000.

One year after Frank’s death, Rep. Judy Chu, D-Pasadena, has introduced federal legislation that protects workers in hot conditions.

The Asuncion Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act — named for a worker who died a preventable death from heat stroke after working for 10 hours straight in 105-degree temperatures — requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to establish a federal requirement that workers in hot conditions have paid breaks in cool spaces, access to water and limitations on how long they can be exposed to heat. The bill is named after a worker who died from heatstroke after working 10 hours straight in 105-degree temperatures. It would cover the U.S. Post Office, where Peggy Frank worked, according to representatives from Chu’s office.

“According to a 2015 study by OSHA, exposure to heat led to 37 work-related deaths and 2,830 nonfatal occupation injuries and illnesses,” Chu said in a statement announcing the bill. “And it’s only expected to get worse. A new report released last week found that rising temperatures from global warming could cost the global economy as much as $69 trillion by 2100, thanks in part to the impact on workers’ health.”

Frank’s death also prompted Dr. Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, who was the interim health officer for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in 2018, to say [employers should enforce breaks](https://www.dailynews.com/2018/07/11/employees-should-force-breaks-in-extreme-heat-top-la-county-health-official-says/) for those who work in extreme heat.

“If it’s really hot, and it’s over 110 (degrees), you should take a 15-minute break every hour and have mandatory hydration,” Gunzenhauser said in a 2018 LA Daily News article. “You have to insist on it. You can’t do heavy exertion (without such breaks.)”

Chu first introduced a heat-stress bill as a member of the California State Assembly and has seen a “positive impact on workers’ health and productivity.” Now, she hopes to expand the bill nationwide.

The Education and Labor Workforce Protections Subcommittee will hold a hearing on the Asuncion Valdivia Illness and Fatality Prevention Act on July 11.

U.S. Rep. Tony Cárdenas, D- Van Nuys — introduced [a bill in February](https://www.dailynews.com/2019/02/15/l-a-mail-carriers-heat-related-death-prompts-bill-to-require-air-conditioning-in-u-s-postal-service-mail-trucks/) that if enacted would require all U.S. Postal Service delivery vehicles to be equipped with air conditioning within three years.

“Peggy Frank would have benefitted from us putting this in place perhaps 10, five, or three years ago and her grandchildren would have a grandmother today,” Cárdenas, D-Panorama City, said in an interview at the time with the Southern California News Group.

The bill, co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Maryland, and dubbed the Peggy Frank Memorial Act, would require any delivery vehicle “owned or leased” by the Postal Service to include an air conditioning unit no later than three years after the bill becomes law.