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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2023

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 10300
Washington, D.C. 20260-1000

Dear Postmaster DeJoy:

I write to express my continued concerns regarding the labor conditions of our federal employees working for the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). On June 20, 2023, a Texas USPS letter carrier died while performing his duties delivering mail.¹ At the time of his passing, Texas and much of the United States was experiencing dangerous extreme heat.² A medical examiner report recently revealed that his exposure to this heat was a factor in his death, noting that his collapse and hypothermia occurred “while working outdoors” and “[t]he outdoor temperature for Dallas on the afternoon of June 20, 2023 was approximately 97 degrees.”³

Back in July 2023, I sent a letter with my Democratic colleagues on the House Oversight Committee to Postmaster DeJoy, requesting answers to a series of questions, including what actions USPS planned to take to mitigate federal employees’ exposure to extreme weather conditions.⁴ While I appreciate your willingness to engage on this issue, more must be done to prepare and protect our federal employees. In the reply, USPS noted that *only* one-third of all current postal vehicles have air condition systems.⁵ While USPS stated it is in the process of

¹ Michael Murney, *Texas Mailman Dies on Job After Collapsing in 115 Heat Index*, Houston Chronical (June 23, 2023), www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/texas-mailman-dies-heat-wave-18165965.php.

² Jennifer Gray, *Triple-digit Heat Across Texas is Forecast to Break Energy Records*, CNN (June 16, 2023), www.cnn.com/2023/06/15/weather/texas-heat-setting-energy-usage-records/index.html.

³ Paul Livengood, *Dallas USPS Mail Worker's Cause of Death Revealed in Autopsy Report*, WFAA (Sept. 29, 2023), www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/dallas-usps-mail-carrier-cause-of-death/287-e59407a2-abd7-4b06-8609-add09607ba40.

⁴ Letter from Jasmine Crockett, U.S. Congress, et al., to Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General, U.S. Postal Serv. (July 7, 2023), www.oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2023-07-07.Raskin%20Crockett%20et%20al.%20to%20DeJoy-USPS%20re%20Worker%20Safety%20Extreme%20Heat.pdf.

⁵ Letter from Ashley Motta, Gov’t Rel. Rep., U.S. Postal Serv. to Rep. Jasmine Crockett, U.S. Congress, at 2 (July 28, 2023).

deploying Next Generation Delivery Vehicles (NGDVs), as well as purchasing commercial off the shelf vehicles, it did not commit that prioritization would be made to specific locations and regions that have—or are prone to—consistent extreme weather conditions.⁶ Moreover, no information was given as to repairing or retrofitting cooling systems in older vehicles that have yet to be replaced. It is alarming that USPS may believe that a four inch-by-four-inch box would be sufficient to protect our federal employees from 100°+ Fahrenheit heat.⁷ To be clear, recent summers and winters have shown us that extreme weather conditions are becoming the norm. Indeed, just this summer, temperatures rose well above national averages with record-breaking heat. Between June to August of this year, the planet experienced its warmest temperatures since data collection began in 1940, with reports that “we will continue to see more climate records and more intense and frequent extreme weather events impacting society” every year thereafter.⁸ Accordingly, it is vital USPS repair or retrofit effective heating and cooling mechanisms in older vehicles, as well prioritize deployment of NGDVs to regions where extreme heat and cold have already impacted the safety and lives of our federal employees.

While I recognize USPS has provided safety talks, messages, and literature under its Heat Illness Prevention Program, questions remain as to the actual implementation and effectiveness of this program. Just yesterday, it was reported that the local Dallas branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers distributed surveys which found that four out of nineteen mail carriers responded “no” when asked if they were “familiar with the HIPP?”⁹ Moreover, *only one* stated he had received HIPP training.¹⁰ This is extremely alarming given that USPS’s July response letter claimed HIPP training was required and must be completed by April 1st of each year.¹¹ Additionally, there are now questions regarding whether records were falsified by USPS to indicate employees completed their HIPP training despite not actually having done so.¹²

I also have grave concerns over reports that USPS is prioritizing timely postal delivery at the expense of the health and safety of our letter carriers and postal workers. Specifically, reports indicate letter carriers received messages this summer to keep delivering mail during extreme heat temperatures in an effort to avoid receiving “stationary event” infractions.¹³ Stationary events occur when a letter carrier’s scanner appears as being idle on a tracker, which then lead to letter carriers being questioned about inefficiencies in their performance and potentially being penalized for stopping along their route. The importance of ensuring that our communities and constituents receive their mail cannot be understated—nevertheless, demands

⁶ *See id.*

⁷ Josephine Lee, *USPS is Falsifying Safety Docs as its Workers Die of Heat*, Texas Observer (Oct. 11, 2023), www.texasobserver.org/usps-worker-heat-death-safety/.

⁸ Bart Meijer, *Summer 2023 was Hottest on Record, Scientists Say*, Reuters (Sept. 7, 2023), www.reuters.com/business/environment/august-was-hottest-ever-recorded-third-straight-month-set-record-2023-09-06/.

⁹ *Supra* note 7.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Letter from Ashley Motta, Gov’t Rel. Rep., U.S. Postal Serv. to Rep. Jasmine Crockett, U.S. Congress, at 2 (July 28, 2023).

¹² *See supra* note 7.

¹³ Tiffany Liou, Paul Livengood & Matt Howerton, *Dallas USPS Carrier was Sent Disciplinary Letter for a “Stationary Event” - then Died on His Route a Month Later*, WFAA (June 30, 2023), www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/dallas-usps-carrier-eugene-gates-disciplined-stationary-event/287-dab4f489-68bf-47d5-9552-1458816b2482.

for timely delivery should not come at the expense of the health and lives of our federal employees.

It is my understanding there remains an open investigation by Occupational Safety and Health Administration into the labor practices of USPS arising from the passing of Mr. Gates. I applaud the agency's work in treating this matter with the importance it deserves. As a member of Congress that oversees the jurisdiction of government operations and the federal workforce, I am dedicated to ensuring our federal employees are protected from avoidable harm which can be achieved by simply modifying federal agency practices and policies.

For all of these reasons, I ask that you provide answers and relevant documents for the following questions by no later than November 17, 2023:

1. Will USPS commit to prioritizing newer vehicles fitted with air conditioning and heating units to those?
 - a. If no, please provide specific justifications for not doing so.
2. Does USPS plan to retrofit air conditioning and heating units in vehicles that currently do not have such systems?
3. What new actions has USPS taken since the passing of Mr. Gates to ensure the safety of federal employees delivering mail in extreme heat conditions?
4. Will USPS pause disciplinary investigations against letter carriers for "stationary events" in locations experiencing extreme heat or cold?
 - a. If no, please provide specific justifications for not doing so.
5. To date, how many USPS employees have legitimately completed Heat Illness Prevention Program training?
6. Does USPS intend to investigate whether records have been falsified regarding the completion of the Heat Illness Prevention Program training?
 - a. If no, please provide specific justifications for not doing so.
7. Does USPS intend to update its Heat Illness Prevention Program training program given the recent extreme temperatures seen this past summer and also include heat acclimatization measures?
 - a. If no, please provide specific justifications for not doing so.

8. Does USPS have a program to address extreme cold conditions?
 - a. If no, please provide specific justifications for not doing so.
 - b. If yes, does such program include mandatory training for all postal employees?
 - c. If yes, does USPS provide informative vehicle stickers and laminated badges identifying the signs and symptoms of cold-related illness, postcards mailed annually to all employees promoting hypothermic awareness, special attention to newly hired employees and those who have been on extended leave, heating in all facilities, ensuring heating systems are kept in service, and an escalation process that prioritizes all requests for heating repairs?
 - i. If yes, please provide copies of such materials.
 - ii. If no, please provide specific justifications for not doing so.

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Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious matter relating to the health and safety of our federal employees. I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress
Texas' 30th District

Cc:

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