

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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December 19, 2023

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Chairman Comer:

We are deeply troubled by reports of unsafe working conditions driven by extreme heat and inadequate workplace safety procedures at the U.S. Postal Service. We urge you to convene a full Committee hearing to examine the Postal Service's efforts to reduce the incidence of heat-related injury and protect Postal Service employees from extreme heat conditions, which is even more critical as we face a global climate emergency and repeated extreme weather events.

On July 7, 2023, my Democratic colleagues and I sent a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy following reports of the death of a Texas letter carrier and concerns about the Postal Service's efforts to protect the safety of letter carriers who operate in extreme heat conditions.¹ Eugene Gates Jr., a letter carrier in Dallas, Texas, died in June 2023 while delivering the mail during an extreme heat wave.² In September 2023, an autopsy conducted by the Dallas County Medical Examiner's office found that Mr. Gates died from extreme heat and heart disease.³

The Postal Service provided a response to the Committee, but we remain concerned with the Postal Service's plans to protect the health and safety of its employees.⁴ During the summer of 2023, multiple letter carriers suffered from heat-related illnesses. For example, one letter carrier based in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, was reportedly "treated at a hospital for heat

¹ Letter from Ranking Member Jamie Raskin et al., Committee on Oversight and Accountability, to Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General, U.S. Postal Service (July 7, 2023) (online at <https://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>).

² *Texas Mailman Dies on Job After Collapsing in 115 Heat Index*, Chron (June 23, 2023) (online at www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/texas-mailman-dies-heat-wave-18165965.php).

³ *Autopsy Reveals Cause of Death for Mail Carrier Who Collapsed in Dallas heat*, Dallas Morning News (Sept. 30, 2023) (online at www.dallasnews.com/news/2023/09/30/autopsy-reveals-cause-of-death-for-mail-carrier-who-collapsed-in-dallas-heat/).

⁴ Letter from Michael J. Gordon, U.S. Postal Service, to Ranking Member Jamie Raskin, Committee on Oversight and Accountability (July 28, 2023).

exhaustion in mid-July,” and seven other letter carriers based in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina reported suffering heat-related illnesses in the summer of 2023.⁵

A recent *Politico* investigation revealed that Postal Service supervisors sent a message to letter carriers pressuring employees to keep pace during the June 2023 heat wave in Dallas, stating: “‘BEAT THE HEAT!!! NO STATIONARY EVENTS,’ it said. ‘KEEP IT MOVING!’”⁶ Another letter carrier in South Carolina was contacted by her supervisor for taking breaks during a heat wave.⁷


The Postal Service’s Health Illness Prevention Program requires postal employees to complete annual staff training on heat-related stress. However, *Politico* compiled numerous complaints against the Postal Service alleging improper staff training records, and in some cases, evidence of postal managers falsifying official records. The National Association for Letter Carriers cites that letter carriers across more than ten states have raised “allegations of training failures and falsified records,” including for more than 2,000 letter carriers in a single U.S. city.⁸

As temperatures continue to rise, letter carriers across the country could be increasingly vulnerable to heat-related illness and injury. As of 2021, Postal Service employees were more likely to face heat-related injury than by motor-vehicle accidents or animal bites.⁹ We are facing a global climate emergency and have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of federal employees who are exposed to extreme weather conditions while balancing the Postal Service’s performance. To that end, we request a public hearing to examine the Postal Service’s efforts to reduce the incidence of heat-related injury and protect its employees from extreme heat conditions.

Sincerely,



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

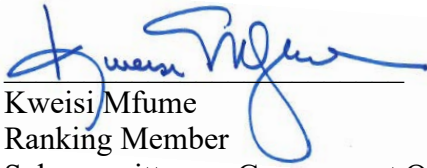
⁵ *A Deadly Delivery Highlights “Falsified” Heat Records at USPS*, *Politico* (Dec. 11, 2023) (online at www.politico.com/news/2023/12/11/usps-major-heat-deaths-00128875).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *U.S. Postal Workers Say the Agency’s Productivity Tracking and Inconsistent Training is Life-Threatening Amid Extreme Heat*, *Business Insider* (Aug. 6, 2023) (online at www.businessinsider.com/usps-postal-workers-productivity-tracking-life-threatening-extreme-heat-wave-2023-8).

⁸ *A Deadly Delivery Highlights “Falsified” Heat Records at USPS*, *Politico* (Dec. 11, 2023) (online at www.politico.com/news/2023/12/11/usps-major-heat-deaths-00128875).

⁹ *Id.*; Bureau of Labor Statistics, *36 Work-Related Deaths Due to Environmental Heat Exposure in 2021* (June 5, 2023) (online at www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2023/36-work-related-deaths-due-to-environmental-heat-exposure-in-2021.htm).



Kweisi Mfume
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and the Federal Workforce



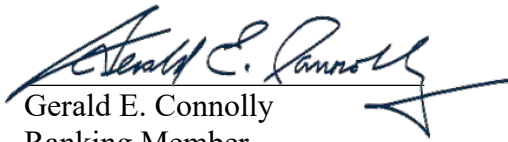
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



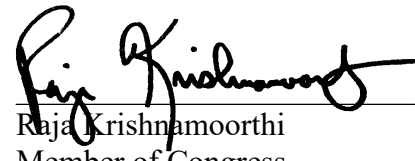
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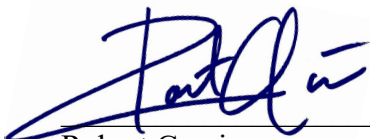
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