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Public Justice urges Biden Administration to expand mandatory protections to all workers in dangerous workplaces

Public Justice is dismayed at the Biden Administration's refusal to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard for all workers in dangerous environments. While Public Justice applauds the administration's issuance of mandatory protections for healthcare workers, the ETS must be expanded to include all workplaces where workers are in danger of contracting the virus.

COVID-19 has killed thousands and sickened hundreds of thousands of workers in barely a year, with a disproportionate impact on workers of color. Even as some workers have been vaccinated, [COVID-19 outbreaks have continued to regularly happen](#) as recently as this May, especially in facilities related to the food system.

Vaccine distribution does not mean that workers are in the clear. [Black and Hispanic adults are less likely to have received the vaccine than white adults](#) – the same groups who are overrepresented in jobs that have consistently been dangerous or deadly over the course of the last year. That danger is a result of corporations having failed to provide personal protective equipment, make distancing possible, and adopt sick leave policies to allow ill or exposed workers to stay home. [Busy schedules and concerns about being unable to take off in the event of side effects have prevented many workers from getting shots.](#)

The Centers for Disease Control is not charged with understanding and enforcing workplace safety laws – only the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is. For OSHA to defer to the CDC as outbreaks remain a live possibility in some workplaces is a grave abdication of responsibility.

The mass scale of illness and death stemming from unsafe workplaces over the course of this ongoing pandemic is proof that if the Administration takes employers at their word by issuing optional guidance, needless illness and death will continue. It is not too late for OSHA to expand the ETS issued for medical workplaces to include all workers who are still in danger of contracting COVID-19.