

2023-2027 Local Bulletin #023

July 20, 2026

DANGEROUS AIR QUALITY

Your rights as a Union member and a worker.

Last week was one of the most challenging weeks we have had in this local in regards to the air quality index.

I have had many members express frustration over not knowing what they could and could not do when it comes to refusing to work in those conditions.

The 'right-to-refuse' unsafe work is nothing new to CUPW members. It is enshrined in Article 33 of our urban collective agreement and BOTH bargaining units have the right to refuse unsafe work under the labour code. You CANNOT be penalized for doing so, unless that refusal is deemed 'frivolous'.

Canada Post chose last week to put its finances ahead of the safety of thousands of workers in Ontario by deciding that Thursday, July 16, 2026 was 'status quo'. It highlights Canada Post's inability to manage the post office and put a glaring spotlight on their actual indifference to YOUR health, both now and long-term.

CMS DOCUMENT T 575456

On the Canada Post website, there is a document numbered as above entitled "**Managing an Emergency Related to a High Air Quality Health Index Value (Seven and more.)**"

Canada Post chose not to use this document last week. In fact, most local area managers, superintendents and supervisors didn't even know of it. This is a massive failure by those in Ottawa in whom our safety is assigned to.

In that document it states that one of the things necessary in a situation where the air quality is seven or more is:

"Concrete accommodations for working indoors are available for employees who decide not to deliver."

Not one of the managers in our area made it known to the membership that the decision to deliver or not to deliver was THEIRS alone. The wording 'concrete accommodation' would suggest meaningful work in your classification, not just being made to sit there for eight hours.

We have filed grievances to ensure that this isn't repeated. While we are still in a situation where the air can worsen, please note that you have the right to refuse unsafe work. YOUR health begins and ends with you.

I would also strongly advise members that were told that they had to deliver on that day contact the local to have them assist you in filing a WSIB exposure report to protect you from any long-term effects of the air quality such as emphysema or COPD. NOW is the time to have your exposure documented.

John Lawrence

President, Oshawa Local

