

- Introduction:
- South FL Cynthia Hernandez, based in Miami, FL.

As many of you may already know, Miami and South Florida are ground zero for sea level rise, severe heat and hurricanes, and crippling infrastructure. Essentially, we could be the next Puerto Rico or New Orleans.

And in 2016, the Central Labor Council in Miami realized that we needed to have a conversation about the Impact of Climate Change on members, their jobs, and their communities. We realized that we could no longer ignore the fact that climate change was having an impact on all of us and we also wanted to figure out where the opportunities existed. Where we could get ahead of climate change policies in an effort to create new organizing possibilities while addressing climate change.

In the Fall of 2017, we were awarded a half million grant for two years to build a labor and community coalition to work on addressing climate change problems and solutions—through organizing campaigns and policy wins to build worker power.

In order to identify the most pressing climate and health issues that our members were facing we conducted a research survey and interviews among labor leaders and our coalition partners which include:

AFSCME FL, IUOE and South Florida Building Trades, Unite HERE, United Teachers of Dade, the Miami Climate Alliance—a group made up of community, grass-roots, advocacy and environmental groups, and a few other community partners.

In the interviews with labor leaders and members we asked how climate impacted their unions and members. I'll briefly share some of these findings:

- ATT technicians (CWA members) who are often working outside setting up cable and wifi connections--are noticing that outside temperatures are increasing. One worker mentioned that in her 25 years as a tech, "the heat waves seem to be getting hotter and hotter. This is very difficult for someone who works long hours directly in the sun."
- Teamster drivers delivering to Miami Beach during rainstorms or high flooding are having to drive under hazardous conditions. The high flood zone areas are disrupting delivery times.
- Transportation workers (TWU) have noticed impacts of increasing transportation and economic disruption on income for hourly workers during natural disasters. Equipment failures due to weather create delays for passengers.
- Port workers (Longshoremen members) lost several days of work during the last hurricane season in 2017 because the port was closed for four days due to Hurricane Irma. Once the port was reopened, workers had to work longer hours to make up for the lost time and delayed services.

- Hotel workers (Unite HERE members) saw a sharp decline of wages during hurricane seasons, as the tourist industry plummeted and less visitors booked hotel rooms and forwent trips to Florida.
- Teachers (UTD members) have identified that children are often the ones most severely impacted by natural disasters. Many children from low-income and neighborhoods of color depend on two free meals (breakfast and lunch) received at school. When schools are closed because of climate related incidents, these children are left hungry. Teachers are also directly impacted as their calendar years are extended due to closed school days, have to work in school and classrooms that have been damaged by the weather, and have to work with children that have experienced trauma during natural disasters.
- Building Trade members are severely impacted by extreme heat and lose work during hurricanes and flooding.

From our surveys we found that over 80% of survey respondents said they were worried about climate change affecting them personally.

When we asked: Have extreme weather events like hurricanes, flooding, or high heat impacted your job on a day to day basis? These were a few of the re-occurring responses

- Forced out of the state
- “Being required to work during a hurricane or bad weather”
  - Job security and losing wages, workplace being closed.
  - Working under Extreme Heat conditions and flooding
  - Unsafe workplace during hurricanes
  - “Not having access to clean, safe drinking water.”
  - working excess hours, without time to care for my own home, during hurricanes.
  - Students go hungry because schools are closed or they lack electricity and food in home

Next Steps, continue to meet on a monthly basis for the next year and a half.

We’ve identified that we want to work on:

- Climate & Health, Education & Mobilization of our members, Climate Gentrification, and create policy goals from each one of our issue areas.

We’ve already begun to do work by pairing university researchers with public school bus drivers to test the temperature readings on school buses. And soon will be working with agriculture and CWA workers as well.

We’ve designed a curriculum and workshop on the basics of climate change in south Florida and are sharing it with unions, locals, and their members.

Part of the Miami People’s Climate Movement on Sept 8<sup>th</sup>.