

# Outdoor workers need protection from pollution

People who must work outdoors on heavily polluted days are in dire need of labor protections, Worker's Daily reported.

Wang Hongtao, a food deliveryman in Beijing, said he receives 30 percent more orders on smoggy days, as people tend to stay home due to personal health concerns.

China's online food delivery company ele.me showed a 39 percent increase in orders on Dec. 16, when Beijing issued a red alert for air pollution, compared to Dec. 14, when the air was good.

A courier named Zhang said his salary depends on the number of packages he delivers, so he cannot afford to stop working when the weather is bad.

Sanitation workers and traffic police are also among those who continue working outdoors on polluted days, yet labor protection for such workers remains poor.

Ma Jingjing, a lawyer in Beijing, said smog can cause irreversible harm to humans, yet some laborers have a poor awareness of the health hazards. Ma said it is necessary for authorities to include professional dust masks among the standard equipment for outdoor workers.

Ma also called for a shortening of outdoor work hours when the air is polluted, or for higher pay on smoggy days.

Zhang Yimin, a political advisor in Ningbo City of Zhejiang Province, also proposed the adoption of flexible hours on polluted days.

It can be hard to directly attribute negative health impacts to smog exposure. This poses a challenge when it comes to verifying smog as a reason for occupational diseases.

Health expert Zhou Shenglai, with the Chinese Hospital Association, says diseases caused by exhaust fumes and smog should be included on the list of occupational diseases for sanitation workers and traffic officers.