

Fight for 15

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'Put mayonnaise on it, you'll be good'

BURNED!

McDonald's Workers Nationwide File OSHA Complaints Alleging Hazardous Work Conditions

Understaffing and pressure to work too fast lead to serious injuries; Workers call on DOL to investigate

Faced with widespread hazards on the job, including bubbling hot oil, white hot grills, and greasy, slippery floors, McDonald's workers who have suffered severe burns announced Monday that they have filed 28 health and safety complaints against the fast-food giant in 19 cities.

They allege that understaffing and pressure to work too fast – hazardous conditions often created by the company's computer system that dictates staffing levels and the pace of work – are the main drivers responsible for the injuries. The complaints further reveal that many McDonald's stores lack basic first aid or protective gear necessary to ensure workers' safety, and that managers often tell workers to treat burns with condiments like mustard rather than burn cream.

"My managers kept pushing me to work faster, and while trying to meet their demands I slipped on a wet floor, catching my arm on a hot grill," said **Brittney Berry, who has worked at McDonald's in Chicago, Ill., since 2011**, and who suffered a severe burn on her forearm and nerve damage from the accident. "The managers told me to put mustard on it, but I ended up having to get rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. This is exactly why workers at McDonald's need union rights, so we have a voice to make the company take responsibility for the dangers it creates in its stores."

The complaints, filed with the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration as well as state safety and health authorities, point to a wide range of serious dangers at the workplace, including: pressure to clean and filter the fryer while the oil is hot; lack of proper protective equipment; floors that are greasy or wet; and missing or empty first aid kits. Complaints were filed at both corporate and franchised locations.

"One of my coworkers and I have to empty the grease trap without protective gear, and since we were never given the proper equipment or training, we just dump the hot grease into a plastic bag in a box of ice," said **Martisse Campbell, who works at McDonald's in Philadelphia, Penn., whose hand was severely burned by boiling grease from a fryer**. "Once, my coworker got badly burned, and our manager told him 'put mayonnaise on it, you'll be good.' McDonald's needs to be held accountable, and that's why workers around the country are joining together."

Burns have been reported as a widespread problem since fast-food workers started organizing in New York City more than two years ago: "In our first meeting, there were 50 workers in a room in New York City who held up their arms covered in burns and said 'this is what it means to be a fast-food worker,'" said **Kendall Fells, Organizing Director of the Fight for \$15**. "As this campaign has spread to cities across the country, it's become painfully clear that unsafe conditions go hand in hand with the industry's low wages."

McDonald's sets minimal health and safety standards for all franchisees, but even these modest measures are not properly enforced. The company watches like a hawk nearly every aspect of its franchisees' business operations via regular inspections, but it too often ignores health and safety problems. Moreover, workers in corporate-owned stores report the same health and safety hazards as workers in franchised restaurants.

"It's a problem that only McDonald's can fix, and the time to fix it is now," Mr. Fells added.

The announcement comes as a new national survey finds that a staggering share of fast-food workers have been burned on the job: 79% of fast-food workers in the U.S. have been burned in the past year, most repeatedly, according to a survey conducted by Hart Research Associates and released Monday by the

National Council for Occupational Safety and Health. Workers cited understaffing and pressure to work too fast as the top reasons they are getting burned on the job.

The survey found that 36% of workers report that first aid kits are missing, inaccessible, or empty, and one-third of fast-food workers in the U.S. had been told to treat burns with condiments like mustard or mayonnaise rather than burn cream

The Fight for \$15 announced Monday the launch of a [petition](#) calling on the U.S. Department of Labor to investigate widespread health and safety hazards in the fast-food industry. And it launched a video and website, burnedbyfastfood.org, to call attention to the prevalence of severe burns in the industry.

Workers announced that they would be holding protests at McDonald's stores across the country Tuesday to demand that the company be held accountable for the widespread dangers at its stores.

The 19 cities where complaints were filed include Kansas City, Mo., Miramar, Fla., Nanuet, N.Y., New York, N.Y., New Orleans, La., and Philadelphia, Penn.

The announcement comes as McDonald's faces [mounting challenges](#) domestically and abroad over [working conditions](#), [tax avoidance](#), and [racial discrimination](#).

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