

HOST

INTRO

Food delivery is an underpaid and dangerous job in New York City. According to Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, in 2021 54% of delivery workers reported being robbed, 30% were assaulted during the robbery, and 16 deceased from a vehicle crash or theft. Delivery workers have won a few battles for better working conditions in the last three years, especially a minimum pay rate law approved in April 2024. Although improvements have been made, delivery workers continue to face the same life-threatening dangers. Thalía Noboa spoke with a few.

Sound byte doorbell

NOBOA 01

We have all heard this sound when we've been too lazy, or too tired, or have had no time to cook.

Sound byte opening package

NOBOA 02

Delivery workers are the connection point between the restaurant and your mouth. And in New York, there are nearly 65 thousand of them. It's almost the population of Portland, Maine.

Sound byte street noise and electric bikes

NOBOA 03

They go up and down, crossing bridges and boroughs, and meandering between cars. They do it on foot, a few on cars, and most on electric bikes.

*But have you ever thought of the risks delivery workers face once that order has gone through the apps?

JAIME 01

I've had a bike stolen.

Spanish: Ya me robaron una bici nomás.

NOBOA 04

This is Jaime Perez, an 18-year-old delivery worker from Mexico. A group of men attacked him in a building's elevator while on his way to deliver an order.

JAIME 02

There were four. They had the weapon... a knife. And they just took everything from me, My wallet, my phone, everything.

Spanish: Eran cuatro. Tenían el arma, el cómo se llama... el cuchillo. Y nomás me quitaron todo, así. La billetera, el celular, todo.

NOBOA 05

While on their way to our door, delivery workers are vulnerable to being run over by cars, theft, and assault. And Erick Aguirre, from Honduras, explains it clearly.

ERICK 01

Delivering a burger...It's a five or seven-dollar delivery with a two-dollar tip. It requires a 15-minute walk...rushing on the bike. Then you take the elevator and sometimes it doesn't work.

Some buildings are sketchy. I get nervous. It's scary, you struggle. Think about it... you can lose your life or get beaten up for a delivery.

Spanish: Por entregar que una hamburguesa, un delivery de cinco o siete dólares por

un tip de dos dólares... por una caminata de 15 minutos, en una corrida con la moto. Y usted va subiendo en los elevadores que a veces no sirven, o sea que son feos, son complejos. Entonces uno se pone nervioso, le da miedo y usted está en esa pelea. Imagínese, puede perder su vida usted o que le den su su mal golpe por entregar un delivery.

NOBOA 06

Oscar Coronado has been delivering food since he arrived from Guatemala thirteen years ago. He has had three electric bikes stolen. The second time he was held at gunpoint, between two cars, on a red light.

OSCAR 01

It's a strategy because they know you have to stop at a red light.

I arrived. stopped and that's when they opened the car door and pointed the gun at me.

Spanish: Es una estrategia. Ellos saben cómo uno tiene que respetar la luz, ¿no? Entonces ellos estaban esperando ahí. Yo llego, freno y me quedé ahí. Y en eso abren la puerta, ¿no? Y ya me apuntan la pistola.

Sound effect bicycle

NOBOA 07

A new electric bike costs around 18 hundred dollars; and between 800 and one thousand second hand.

Many workers have been murdered for their bikes.

NOBOA 08

Over imminent life-threatening risks, solidarity has risen among the restaurants' staff. Plenty of thefts and assaults happen in the elevators and stairs.

ZYZONG 01

Our delivery guys get robbed when they go under unsafe buildings.

NOBOA 09

Zyzong Lumoning is a cashier and packer at Charm Thai Express in Washington Heights.

ZYZONG 02

And we solved that by... they have to come down to the street. Like a more public city people around so...

NOBOA 10

Delivery workers have organized through social media. There are a myriad of Facebook groups categorized by neighborhood. Here, they post about stolen bikes and mopeds, their peers' deaths, and even ask for company when driving to a dangerous area.

OSCAR 02

So we go in a group, sometimes it's ten people. That helps us a lot... There is a phrase that says those who unite will never be defeated.

Spanish: Entonces nosotros vamos en grupo, a veces de diez personas. Pues eso nos ayuda mucho. Hay una frase que dice no que unidos dice jamás será vencido.