Cold Stress Hazards Stats & Facts



Facts

- Wind chill is the combination of air temperature and wind speed. For example, when the air temperature is 40º F. and the wind speed is 35 mph, your exposed skin receives conditions equivalent to the air temperature being 11º F. While it is obvious that below freezing conditions combined with inadequate clothing could bring about cold stress, it is also important to understand that it can also be brought about by temperatures in the 50’s coupled with some rain and wind.
- When working outdoors in cold weather or working in artificially cold environments, such as refrigerated areas, serious cold-related injuries and illnesses may occur. Cold related hazards can cause permanent tissue damage or even death.
- Snow shovelling is particularly strenuous because it uses arm work, which is more taxing than leg work. Straining to move wet and heavy snow is particularly likely to cause a surge in heart rate and blood pressure.
- Many people hold their breath during the hard work, which also puts a strain on the body.
- People at greatest risk are those who are habitually sedentary with known or suspected coronary disease, who go out once a year to clear snow, increase the risk. If you must do it, push rather than lift the snow, dress in layers, take regular breaks indoors and don’t eat or smoke before shovelling.

STATS

1. **Every winter, about 100 people in the US die while shovelling snow.**

A study looking at data from 1990 to 2006 by researchers at the US Nationwide Children’s Hospital recorded 1,647 fatalities from cardiac-related injuries associated with shovelling snow. In Canada, these deaths make the news every winter.

2. **CDC Report: Cold Kills More People Than Heat**

A report by the National Center for Health Statistics reveals that winter cold kills more Americans than summer heat. Each year, approximately 2,000 workers die due to weather-related causes. Of that population, 63% of deaths are caused by exposure to cold and/or hypothermia, while only 31% are attributed to heat-related exposure such as heat or sun stroke.

3. According to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**, in 2014, there were 42,480 **workplace injuries** involving ice, sleet, or snow that demanded at least one day

off. Of these injuries, and illnesses, 34,860 (82 percent) were the result of falls on the same level – not from heights.