Carbon Monoxide Kills Two Workers Stranded in the Snow

Two men died from carbon monoxide poisoning after being stranded in the snow while driving home from work. As a dangerous winter storm swept across Montreal, Pierre Thibault and Michaël Fiset, chose to try and drive home from work despite their co-workers pleading with them to wait the storm out with them at the office.

Fiset, 33, who drove a Ford-150 with all-wheel drive, was confident he could navigate the difficult conditions, despite heavy snow and high winds. When they left the office around 9:24 p.m., Fiset planned to drop his friend off at his home, about 8 miles/13 kilometers away, before heading to his own home.

Just a few hours earlier, the highways along their planned route had been closed because of whiteout conditions on the roads. However, Fiset decided to drive around the road closure barrier and continued his journey. At 10:43 p.m., he became stuck in a 5-foot/1.5-meter-high snowdrift.

Both men contacted locals to say the needed help, but no one could venture out because there was zero visibility and they couldn’t see across the street. Thibault, 42, then made calls to the provincial police (SQ) and 911 at 11:18 p.m., saying they were stuck in the snow and needed assistance.

While police were trying to mobilize the rescue team, conditions in the truck were deteriorating.

- Fiset made a second call to 911 at 12:05 a.m. and a third call at 12:51 a.m., saying Thibault was having an asthma attack and was having trouble breathing.
- At 12:58 a.m., police informed the men a rescue team would be leaving shortly.
- By 1:16 a.m., Fiset called police to say he was also having trouble breathing and that Thibault was now unconscious. It was the last call Fiset would make.

The SQ snowmobile team was finally able to leave at 1:20 a.m. as the storm continued to intensify with howling winds and whiteout conditions. About 30 minutes into the trip they also became stuck in a snowdrift. They continued on

foot and arrived on the scene at 2:15 a.m. but could not find Fiset's truck – by this time it was buried in the snow. They eventually found the truck at 7:50 a.m. buried in 9 feet/3 meters of snow.

They found Fiset dead outside the truck and Thibault dead in the driver's seat. The coroner stated the cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning, likely due to the truck's tailpipe being blocked with snow.

https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/men-trapped-in-vehicle-died-of-carbon-monoxide-poisoning-coroner-says

These two men did not have to die. They had at least three chances before the truck became stuck to avoid the resulting accident. If they had done any of the following the outcome would have been different.

1. Listened to the advice of their co-workers and stayed at the office until it was safe to leave.
2. Heeded the emergency warnings telling motorists to stay off the roads and stayed at the office until it was safe to leave.
3. Decided to obey the road closure barricades instead of going around them.

Once the truck became stuck, they could have avoided or lessened the chance of carbon monoxide poisoning by:

1. Checking the exhaust pipe was not blocked by snow (or anything else).
2. Leaving a window in the truck slightly open for ventilation.

FOR MORE HELP PROTECTING WORKERS AGAINST WINTER DRIVING

Click on the links below:

- Safety Talk – Survive the Winter Drive this Winter
- Checklist – Preparing Your Vehicle for Winter