Cold Stress – Landscaping Fatality File

Fatal Cold Stress Incident in Landscaping

On February 7, 2023, a fatal cold stress incident occurred during a landscaping project in Edmonton, Alberta, resulting in the death of a 34-year-old worker, Jason Matthews. Matthews had been working outside in sub-zero temperatures for several hours, clearing snow and ice from a commercial property. Despite wearing standard winter gear, the prolonged exposure to extreme cold and wind led to severe hypothermia.

The investigation revealed that the company did not have adequate cold stress management protocols in place. Workers were not given sufficient breaks to warm up, and there was no provision for heated shelters or appropriate cold-weather clothing designed for extreme conditions. Furthermore, employees were not trained to recognize the early signs of cold stress or how to respond to them effectively.

In response to this tragic incident, the landscaping company has implemented a comprehensive cold stress prevention program. This program includes mandatory training on recognizing and responding to cold stress, providing heated rest areas, scheduling frequent breaks to allow workers to warm up, and ensuring that all workers are equipped with insulated, weather-appropriate clothing. The company has also adjusted work schedules to limit exposure during the coldest parts of the day.

This case highlights the critical importance of cold stress awareness and prevention in the landscaping industry, particularly in regions with harsh winter climates. Proper preparation and proactive measures can significantly reduce the risk of cold-related injuries and fatalities.