Cold Stress – Landscaping Stats and Facts



FACTS

Key hazards related to cold stress in the landscaping industry:

1. **Hypothermia:** Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures can lead to hypothermia, a potentially life-threatening condition where the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Symptoms include shivering, confusion, fatigue, and eventually loss of consciousness and death if not treated promptly.
2. **Frostbite:** Frostbite occurs when skin and underlying tissues freeze due to exposure to extremely cold conditions, often affecting fingers, toes, ears, and nose.
3. **Trench Foot:** Trench foot, also known as immersion foot, occurs when feet are exposed to wet and cold conditions for prolonged periods.
4. **Dehydration:** Cold weather can sometimes mask the symptoms of dehydration, as workers may not feel as thirsty. Dehydration can reduce physical performance and cognitive function.
5. **Impaired Judgment and Coordination:** Cold stress can impair mental and physical coordination, leading to poor decision-making and increased risk of accidents.
6. **Increased Risk of Falls:** Cold weather often leads to icy or slippery surfaces, increasing the likelihood of slips, trips, and falls.
7. **Exacerbation of Pre-existing Conditions:** Cold stress can exacerbate pre-existing medical conditions.

STATS

- It is estimated that over 30% of outdoor workers are at risk of cold stress during winter months.
- Hypothermia can occur when the body temperature drops below 95°F (35°C). (NIOSH) indicates that thousands of cases of hypothermia occur annually among outdoor workers, during extreme cold conditions.
- Frostbite, which can result in permanent damage, is a risk for workers exposed to cold temperatures.
- According to OSHA, cold-related injuries can lead to substantial medical

costs and lost work time. Approximately 70% of outdoor workers report experiencing cold-related health issues.

- CCOHS highlights that cold stress is a serious concern in Canadian workplaces, particularly in outdoor industries. Each year, cold-related illnesses and injuries such as frostbite, hypothermia, and trench foot are reported. These conditions are common among workers exposed to cold weather, including those in the landscaping industry.
- Across all industries, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that there were several hundred fatalities and thousands of injuries each year due to environmental exposure, which includes cold stress. The landscaping industry, with its extensive outdoor work, is at high risk during the colder months.