Heat Stress – Landscaping Fatality File



Fatal Heat Stress Incident in Landscaping

On July 19, 2023, a fatal heat stress incident occurred during a landscaping project in Phoenix, Arizona, resulting in the death of a 36-year-old worker, Luis Hernandez. Hernandez had been working outdoors for several hours in extreme temperatures exceeding 110°F (43°C) without adequate breaks or access to sufficient hydration. Despite showing signs of heat exhaustion earlier in the day, Hernandez continued working until he collapsed on the job site.

Emergency services were called, but Hernandez was pronounced dead at the scene due to heat stroke—a severe form of heat stress that occurs when the body overheats and can no longer regulate its temperature.

The investigation revealed that the landscaping company failed to implement adequate heat stress prevention measures, such as providing shaded rest areas, enforcing mandatory hydration breaks, and training workers to recognize the early signs of heat-related illnesses. Additionally, there were no heat illness prevention plans in place, which are crucial during the peak summer months in regions like Arizona.

In response to this tragedy, the company has introduced a comprehensive heat stress management program. This includes mandatory training on recognizing and preventing heat-related illnesses, scheduled breaks in shaded areas, access to cool drinking water, and monitoring of workers’ health in extreme temperatures.