

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population; begins to cause serious illness; and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide. A worldwide influenza pandemic could have a major effect on the global economy, including travel, trade, tourism, food, consumption and eventually, investment and financial markets. Planning for pandemic influenza by business and industry is essential to minimize a pandemic's impact.

It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever a pandemic starts, everyone around the world is at risk. Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of the virus, but cannot stop it.

During a pandemic, transmission can be anticipated in the workplace, not only from patient to workers in health care settings, but also among co-workers in general work settings. A pandemic would cause high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss. Everyday life would be disrupted because so many people in so many places become seriously ill at the same time. Impacts could range from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and food delivery.

Education and outreach are critical to preparing for a pandemic. Understanding what a pandemic is, what needs to be done at all levels to prepare for pandemic influenza, and what could happen during a pandemic helps us make informed decisions both as individuals and as a nation. Should a pandemic occur the public must be able to depend on its government to provide scientifically sound public health information quickly, openly and dependably. For additional information on pandemic influenza, see One-stop access to U.S. government avian and pandemic flu information.

COLD STRESS

Workers who are exposed to extreme cold or work in cold environments may be at risk of cold stress. Extreme cold weather is a dangerous situation that can bring on health emergencies in susceptible people, such as those without shelter, outdoor workers, and those who work in an area that is poorly insulated or without heat. What constitutes cold stress and its effects can vary across different areas of the country. In regions relatively unaccustomed to winter weather, near freezing temperatures are considered factors for "cold stress." Whenever temperatures drop decidedly below normal and as wind speed increases, heat can more rapidly leave your body. These weather-related conditions may lead to serious health problems.

"By focusing our inspection resources on employers in high hazard industries who endanger their employees, we can prevent injuries and illnesses and save lives," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA David Michaels. "Through the SST program we examine all major aspects of these operations to determine the effectiveness of their safety and health efforts."

Hypothermia

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. A body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and will not be able to do anything about it.

Symptoms

Symptoms of hypothermia can vary depending on how long you have been exposed to the cold temperatures.

Early Symptoms

- Shivering
- Fatigue
- Loss of coordination
- Confusion and disorientation

Late Symptoms

- No shivering
- Blue skin
- Dilated pupils
- Slowed pulse and breathing
- Loss of consciousness

First Aid

Take the following steps to treat a worker with hypothermia:

- Alert the supervisor and request medical assistance.
- Move the victim into a warm room or shelter.
- Remove their wet clothing.

[More on Cold Stress and Prevention](#)



Publisher: Building Industry
Employers of New York State
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MONTHLY TOOLBOX TALK

How can weather affect your site?

WEATHER

WHY TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER? ACTUALLY, WE HAVE NO CONTROL OVER RAIN, SNOW, SLEET, WIND, LIGHTNING OR SUNSHINE. BUT WE CAN CONTROL WHAT HAPPENS ON OUR JOB AS A RESULT OF THE ELEMENTS. SOME OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS ON CONSTRUCTION JOBS ARE CAUSED BY WIND AND LIGHTNING. WIND PROBABLY CAUSES THE MOST ACCIDENTS; LIGHTNING CAN BE DEADLY.

WATCH OUT FOR WIND DON'T LET THE WIND CATCH YOU OFF GUARD. I'M NOT JUST THINKING OF TORNADOES OR HURRICANES, BUT OF EVERYDAY WINDS AND UNEXPECTED GUSTS. WIND JUST LOVES TO PICK UP ANYTHING IT CAN AND SAIL IT AWAY. SO WHEN IT'S WINDY, SECURELY TIE OR WEIGHT DOWN SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS. IT'S AMAZING WHAT A LITTLE WIND CAN DO. SOME GUSTS CAN PICK UP A 4 X 8 SHEET OF PLYWOOD FROM THE TOP OF A HIGH RISE BUILDING AND CARRY IT SEVERAL BLOCKS. OR BLOW YOU OFF A SCAFFOLD.

ON ONE OCCASION, THE WIND BLEW EMPTY 50 GALLON DRUMS OFF A 15-STORY BUILDING. ONE DRUM WENT THROUGH THE ROOF OF A TOOL SHED. WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE DRUM HAD LANDED ON YOU? YOU'D HAVE HAD MORE THAN A GIANT SIZED HEADACHE.

IT SEEMS THE HIGHER YOU GO, THE STRONGER THE WIND. WHEN WORKING ON TALL BUILDINGS, STAY AWAY FROM ROOF EDGES, FLOOR OPENINGS, AND SIMILAR DROP-OFFS WHERE THE WIND COULD BLOW YOU OVER. WEIGHT DOWN OR OTHERWISE SECURE MATERIAL OR EQUIPMENT THAT CAN BE BLOWN DOWN.

DON'T LOITER ON THE LEEWARD SIDE OF UNBRACED WALLS, LUMBER STACKS OR ANYTHING ELSE THAT CAN BE BLOWN OVER BY A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND. IN MANY INSTANCES, WORKERS HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY INJURED WHEN AN UNBRACED WALL OR FORM WAS BLOWN OVER ON THEM WHILE THEY WERE SITTING IN ITS SHADE DURING LUNCH OR BEFORE STARTING WORK.

LIGHTNING HURTS EVERY SO OFTEN WE READ ABOUT WORKERS BEING STRUCK BY LIGHTNING. THEY USUALLY COME OUT SECOND BEST.

RECENTLY A HOOK-UP MAN WAS ELECTROCUTED WHEN LIGHTNING STRUCK THE CRANE BOOM WHILE HE WAS HOLDING ON TO THE HOOK PREPARING SOME MATERIALS TO BE LIFTED.

WE ALL LIKE TO KEEP THINGS MOVING UNTIL WE'RE RAINED OUT. BUT WHEN LIGHTNING IS AROUND, IT'S SAFER TO TAKE SHELTER EARLY. VERY OFTEN AN ELECTRICAL STORM OCCURS WITHOUT RAIN. OR A LIGHTNING STORM PROCEEDS THE RAIN. SO IF YOU'RE WORKING WITH A CRANE, ON TOP OF STEEL FRAME-WORK, OR AROUND OTHER PROJECTING EQUIPMENT OR A BUILDING THE SAFEST THING TO DO IS TO SEEK SHELTER WHEN YOU SEE LIGHTNING.

YOU'LL BE REASONABLY SAFE FROM LIGHTNING IN-SIDE THE STRUCTURE, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT'S EQUIPPED WITH LIGHTNING RODS. YOU'LL ALSO BE FAIRLY SAFE IN AN AUTOMOBILE OR TRUCK. BUT NEVER TAKE SHELTER UNDER AN ISOLATED TREE OR WHERE YOU'RE IN CONTACT WITH A TRACTOR, CRANE, OR OTHER EQUIPMENT. IF YOU GET CAUGHT OUT IN THE OPEN, STAY AS LOW AS YOU CAN. IT'S MUCH SAFER TO BE DOWN IN A DITCH THAN ON TOP OF THE GROUND.

RAIN CAN RUIN A JOB RAIN MAY BE GOOD FOR THE FARMER BUT IT CAN PLAY HAVOC WITH A CONSTRUCTION JOB. IT CAN TURN IT INTO A GIGANTIC MUD PIE. WATER SEEMS TO GET IN EVERYWHERE. RAIN CAN RUIN BUILDING MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES AND GENERALLY MAKE THINGS DOWN RIGHT MESSY. STEEL GETS SLIPPERY, EQUIPMENT GETS STUCK, AND WE GET WET.

BY COVERING EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS, TOOLS, SUPPLIES AND OURSELVES, WE DON'T GIVE RAIN A CHANCE TO DO AS MUCH DAMAGE AS IT COULD. WE CAN ELIMINATE SLIPPING HAZARDS BY SWEEPING WATER OUT OF LOW AREAS USED AS PASSAGEWAYS INSIDE OF BUILDINGS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

DON'T SLIP ON ICE AND SNOW WHEN WE WORK IN COLDER CLIMATES, ICE AND SNOW MAKE THINGS SLIPPERY. CLEAN AND SAND ANY WORK SURFACES, SUCH AS SCAFFOLDS AND PASSAGEWAYS, WHERE THERE IS ICE AND SNOW. OR TURN THE PLANKS OVER. WE NEED THE BEST POSSIBLE FOOTING WE CAN GET. WE DON'T WANT TO END UP LIKE ONE FELLOW. HE DIDN'T SWEEP OFF THE SCAFFOLD ONE AFTERNOON AFTER SOME LIGHT SNOW HAD FALLEN DURING THE MORNING. HE SLIPPED AND FELL TEN STORIES TO HIS DEATH.

CONTROLLING THE WEATHER AS I SAID, WE CAN CONTROL THE WEATHER ONLY AS FAR AS IT AFFECTS THE JOB. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DISCUSS ALL OF THE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS THAT CAN BETAKEN IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER. BUT COMMON SENSE USUALLY DICTATES THE RIGHT THING TO DO IN ANY SITUATION.