

Working In Extreme Cold Fatality File



A FedEx worker found dead at a delivery facility was one of 23 killed in the extreme weather

A 69-year-old FedEx worker has been found dead outside a delivery hub in western Illinois, and police believe the extreme cold snap that hit the country this week played a role.

The man, whose name wasn't released, is among 23 people killed in the United States as a result of extreme weather conditions this week. Cook County, Illinois, which includes Chicago, announced three deaths on Friday, including a 92-year-old man.

At the FedEx delivery hub in East Moline, a coworker found the man's body outside between two tractor-trailers Thursday morning, police Capt. Darren Gault said.

It wasn't immediately clear how long the worker had been there, or why he was there. The hub had been closed on Wednesday.

It was extremely cold in the Moline area this week. At an airport only 10 miles from the hub, temperatures dipped below zero late Tuesday afternoon and never rose above that until Thursday evening. Wednesday evening's low was 29 below with a wind chill of 34 below; Thursday morning's low was 33 below.

"We are saddened by the loss of our team member and our sympathies go out to his family and friends," FedEx said in a statement Friday. "We are working with local authorities as they investigate.

"FedEx has contingency plans in place to ensure the well-being of our team members and service providers. Several of our centers, including the Rock Island center, were closed or running very limited operations this week due to the extreme cold."

The three dead from the cold in Chicago were the man, 92, and two women, 62 and 73, the medical examiner's office said.

In New York's Erie County, three deaths were reported Thursday. They included someone found dead at a bus stop, and two men who were removing snow, said Peter Anderson, spokesman for the county executive's office.

Eight were in Iowa, where some were due to car wrecks in snowy conditions. Weather-related deaths were also reported in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin and New York, authorities said.

One of the Iowa deaths was Gerald Belz, a sophomore student at the University of Iowa, who died outside a building on campus.

He was found unresponsive around 3 a.m. on Wednesday when the temperature was 21 below zero. He died at a hospital.

His father told CNN affiliate KWWL that his son's 19th birthday was coming in February.

"He has touched so many people in such a positive way," the father told the station. "There's times (since his death) where we reminisce and we laugh, and there's times we reminisce and cry."

According to KWWL, Belz, who was in his first year at the Iowa City school, was found across the street from a 24-hour building where students study. It is about a quarter-mile from his residence hall.