Insulation Work – Protecting Buildings – and Protecting Yourself Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. **Skin, Eye & Respiratory Irritation from Fiberglass:** Handling fiberglass insulation irritates skin, eyes, and respiratory passages, requiring long sleeves, gloves, head coverings, goggles, and dust respirators when necessary.
2. **Confined Space Hazards:** Insulating in attics, crawl spaces, or equipment rooms can lead to low-oxygen atmospheres or chemical vapor buildup, requiring confined space protocols, ventilation, and respiratory protection.
3. **Fall Risk:** Installing insulation in attics or elevated areas exposes workers to fall hazards; harnesses, guardrails and CSA-compliant footwear are required.
4. **Heat and Cold Stress Outdoors:** Insulation work in extreme weather requires insulated, waterproof clothing and UV protection in cold environments—and breathable gear and hydration in heat.
5. **Mechanical & Tool Injuries:** Cutting insulation (batts, board) using knives or power tools can cause lacerations, necessitating cut-resistant gloves and eye protection.
6. **Foot & Electrical Hazards:** Working near electrical systems or sharp debris requires CSA-rated safety-toe boots and, for electrical, insulated gloves/sleeves rated to voltage.

STATS

- In 2024, OSHA recorded 5,190 workplace fatalities, with construction accounting for 21% (1,090 cases). Falls (423 cases) were the leading cause for insulation workers, followed by struck-by incidents (316 cases), emphasizing the need for fall protection and hard hats.

- A 2022 NIOSH study found that 35% of insulation workers exposed to fiberglass dust or spray foam chemicals lacked proper respiratory protection, increasing risks of lung irritation or long-term conditions like silicosis.
- WorkSafeBC reported 25–30 annual construction fatalities in British Columbia (2020–2023), with insulation workers at risk from falls (40%) and struck-by incidents (15%) during attic or wall installations. Hard hats and fall protection are critical.
- CCOHS 2023 data showed that workplaces enforcing respirators and protective clothing reduced insulation-related injuries by 20%, particularly for tasks involving fiberglass or spray foam.
- In 2024, Ontario introduced fines up to $500,000 for repeat OHS violations, including PPE non-compliance, impacting insulation contractors failing to provide respirators, gloves, or fall protection.