Seven Statistics on Wind Hazards

From the annoyance of sending dirt into your eyes to the far more serious possibilities of suffering hypothermia or being blown over a roof edge, wind can have serious implications on workplace safety. Here are seven statistics relating to wind hazards:

1. Wind can make workers feel cold because of these two effects: It removes the thin layer of warmth next to your skin—known as the boundary layer—and it evaporates moisture from skin or damp clothing.
2. In Canada, wind chill is included in weather forecasts when the temperature dips to -25 degrees Celsius (-13 degrees Fahrenheit), because of the risk of frostbite.
3. Three hazards of wind gusts at construction sites are: unsecured objects flying around and possibly injuring workers and others; the risk of walls and scaffolding collapsing; and fall hazards, such as workers being blown off rooftops.
4. Six things workers should do to help ensure their safety when working in windy conditions are: wear eye protection to prevent dust and debris from entering their eyes; bring along extra layers of clothing that can be added when the wind makes temperatures feel colder; restrain materials so they will not blow away; stand well away from stacks of material and structures that could blow over; always wear fall protection gear when working at heights; and be careful when carrying objects such as plywood sheets that could turn into “sails” and take workers with them when caught by heavy wind gusts.
5. Aerial work platforms should never be used in winds exceeding 28 miles per hour (45 kilometers per hour). Ladders can also blow over in strong winds.
6. One proactive thing supervisors should do on outdoor construction sites is to check weather forecasts for wind hazards before allowing workers to perform certain tasks.

7. Three deaths relating to wind gusts are as follows: A young construction worker fell to his death after a wind gust sent him over a 14th floor roof in Toronto; another worker in Pulaski, NY, who was installing metal sheeting on a car dealership roof flew off a roof, along with a large piece of metal, and died; and a three-year-old girl in Calgary, AB, died after being struck by a large sheet of corrugated metal that blew off a building under construction.