

# Employing Effective Health and Safety Measures won't Leave You Out in the Cold

**Employees working in the harsh environments found in cold stores and refrigerated warehouses, where temperatures can reach temperatures as low as -40°C, often encounter extremely serious and potentially life threatening situations on a daily basis. This includes risk of cold injury, health problems and the increased possibility of equipment failure.**

However, it is the potential for accidental lock-ins which poses the biggest health and safety threat in cold stores and refrigerated warehousing facilities, as this could quite easily lead to a fatal accident. As a result, more and more employers are under pressure to comply with health and safety legislation and take effective preventative action.

It is every employer's duty, according to the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999,

to ensure that its workplace is safe and all staff are given relevant information, instruction, training and supervision with regard to health and safety. In the UK, it is the responsibility of employers to assess any health and safety risks that staff may be vulnerable to and make arrangements for the necessary measures to be implemented.

If a company employs five or more staff it also has to draw up a Health and Safety Policy statement, set up emergency procedures and make sure the workplace satisfies health, safety and welfare requirements for the provision of ventilation, temperature and lighting facilities. It is also the responsibility of employers to provide the necessary protective clothing or equipment where risks are not adequately controlled by other means, to ensure that safety signs are provided and maintained and that employees are correctly using work items supplied such as personal protective equipment.

The Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) guidance on precautions to prevent people being trapped in a freezer room or cold enclosed area, state that a minimum of an audible alarm actuator should be provided inside the cold area and the alarm itself should be located so that it will attract maximum attention.

Companies using cold stores should also be aware of The Confined Space Regulations 1997 as dangers can also arise in confined spaces because of lack of oxygen and, in the case of cold stores, through low temperatures.

As a result, employers should identify any hazards present in confined spaces and ensure safe systems exist where staff have to work in such areas. Risk assessments should be carried out by employers to identify necessary precautions and reduce the risk of injury. In addition, safe systems of work should be developed, put into practice and everyone involved should be properly trained and instructed to make sure they know what to do and how to do it safely.

One solution to ensure the safety of employees using cold stores and to prevent employees becoming trapped inside is the Trapped Personnel Alarm from Stonegate Instruments.

The Alarm is designed to monitor latching emergency push buttons located inside cold stores and give audio as well as visual alarms if someone is trapped. They can be panel door or wall mounted, are backed up by batteries and have mains failure alert mechanisms, as well as mute and repeat features.

It operates by the person accidentally trapped in the cold store striking the emergency alarm button which latches and alerts colleagues by audio and visual alarms on the display panel outside the cold store, suitably located to attract the most attention. The display also sets a volt-free relay to repeat the call to a siren or dial-out or any other remote alarm.

All Trapped Personnel Alarms are compact in size, generally of 122mm x 122mm x 65mm width, height and depth dimensions and comprise 5mm pitch screw terminals and maximum cable size of 2.5mm<sup>2</sup>. It is also essential, however, that Trapped Personnel Alarms



Trapped Personnel Alarms help to ensure that industrial cold stores are safer places to work

are properly maintained and regularly tested to ensure they are in good working order.

"Health and safety is the fundamental element common to the design and manufacture of all our personnel alarm systems," says Stonegate Instruments' managing director, Shaun Evers. "We are in the business of making cold store environments safer places to work, with products that are easy to install, fast and effective and, more importantly can save lives."

As well as possibly saving lives, companies that follow relevant health and safety regulations and directives applying to cold stores and industrial refrigeration facilities reduce risk in the workplace, ensuring the safety of their employees.

Demonstrating a commitment to health and safety can lead to competitive advantage, improved performance and a reduction in spend on insurance premiums and penalties.

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