The BMJ partners with CDC to showcase new report on cold related deaths

The BMJ has partnered with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to showcase a new report on cold related deaths in the United States.

Published today, the CDC report shows that the rate of cold-related deaths is markedly higher in rural counties of the west than in other regions of the United States.

The BMJ has created a state-by-state, interactive infographic to accompany the report that illustrates the data visually.

CDC researchers analyzed records of 5,768 deaths reported during 2010-13 that were deemed to be related to cold.

They found that the age adjusted death rate in non-metropolitan areas of the US west was 20.4 deaths per million population, whereas in non-metropolitan areas of other regions the rate varied from 4.5 to 7.7 deaths per million.

Nationwide, death rates in metropolitan areas were considerably lower, ranging from 2.9 to 4.9 per million.

The mountain regions in the western US had higher cold-related death rates than the coastal states, with the highest rates being seen in rural Arizona and New Mexico. The remaining states included in the western region in this analysis were Hawaii and the three states along the Pacific coast -
California, Oregon, and Washington - as well as the mountain region states of Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming.

The CDC researchers said that their analysis did not set out to show why the people living in the rural west were at higher risk, but a previous CDC report published in 2014 indicated that people who lived in places with rapid temperature shifts, with large shifts in night-time temperatures, and at high elevations were at an increased risk of cold- related deaths.

That study also found that weather-related death rates, resulting from heat and cold and from storms, lightning, and flooding, can be up to seven times higher in low income counties than in high income counties.

Many rural counties in the US west have a high prevalence of poverty.

In general, people at highest risk of cold-related deaths included older adults, infants, men, African Americans, and people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Nationally, the rate of cold related deaths among adults increases with age.

Although winter temperatures have been milder in North America since the 1950s, there has been an increase in storm frequency and intensity during the cold season, and extremely low temperatures are not uncommon.

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Rural West has highest rate of cold related deaths in US, CDC report shows

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Infographic: [www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h1211/infographic](http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h1211/infographic)
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Media Coverage

Here's where cold temperatures are the deadliest in the US - The Verge

Cold Exposure Deaths Higher in Rural Western Areas of US - Live Science

Health Highlights - U.S. News & World Report

Cold related deaths found more prominent in rural West - Healio