SILICA: DANGEROUS DUST

KNOW THE EXPOSURE, USE THE CONTROLS, REDUCE YOUR RISK

WHAT IS SILICA?

Silica is everywhere. It's found naturally in stone, rocks, sand, gravel and clay. It's part of bricks, tiles and slates on our roofs, concrete, and artificial stone benchtops. Even some fillers and plastic composite products use silica. Left alone, silica is safe. But if you work on materials that are made up of silica, you'll be releasing dangerous silica dust.

WHAT IS SILICA DUST?

Silica dust is the very fine dust that's created when you cut, drill, grind, chip or sand materials and products that contain silica.

WHY IS SILICA DUST DANGEROUS?

Silica dust can be harmful if you breathe it in. Silica dust particles are much smaller than normal dust – and they can get deep into your lungs and stay there, permanently damaging the lung tissue and eventually leading to serious lung diseases in some people. Silica dust can cause cancer, silicosis and diseases like emphysema and bronchitis.

Cancer Council | KNOW WORKPLACE CANCER

cancer.org.au/workcancer

For information and support

Call us on 13 11 20

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SILICA AND DUST AT WORK

WHERE DOES SILICA DUST COME FROM?

Each year an estimated **230** people in Australia develop lung cancer due to silica dust exposure at work.

BREATHE EASY

Protect yourself from deadly silica dust at work. Depending on what you're doing, your employer will tell you which steps to take – and when. Using a combination of protective measures can reduce your risk of exposure.

Your employer should also think about changing the product or process, for example:

- Eliminate the use of materials with high levels of silica (such as manufactured stone) by using products with low or no silica.
- Use fibre cement sheet shears instead of circular saws.
- Ensure rock-drilling machines have dust suppression features.
- Vehicles should have a dust collection system and an air conditioned cab with a filtered air supply.

1

USE LOCAL EXHAUST VENTILATION

Use a ventilation system to suck the dust away before you can breathe it in. Some workstations have hoods or enclosures.

2

OPERATE ON-TOOL EXTRACTION

Make sure you use the controls integrated or mounted onto a hand-held tool to capture the dust while you're using it.

3

DAMP DOWN DUST

Use water to keep dust levels down whenever possible. You need to use enough water for the whole time that the work is being done. Just wetting the material before you start doesn't work.

4

WEAR RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

Choose the correct RPE for the job and use in combination with other controls. All RPE masks need to be 'fit tested' and will not provide a good seal unless the worker is clean-shaven.

5

GET TRAINED

Understand the dangers of silica exposure, and when and how to use dust controls and protective equipment.

KEEP DUST DOWN

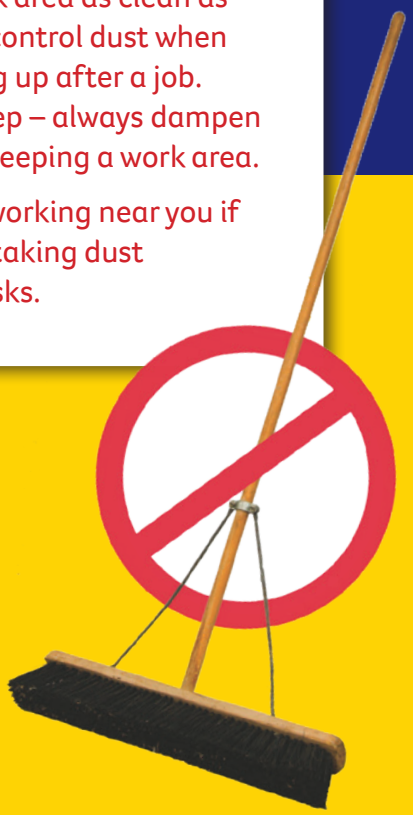
Even a quick task can create dangerous levels of silica dust. Silica dust particles are so small that they float in the air for longer – and can be breathed deep into your lungs.

MONITORING EXPOSURE

Your employer should measure your exposure to silica dust. Air monitoring should be conducted by a trained person if there is a possible risk to health or potential of exceeding the exposure standard. Health monitoring should be provided to those who work with silica containing materials.

Keep your work area as clean as possible, and control dust when you're cleaning up after a job. Never dry sweep – always dampen down when sweeping a work area.

Inform those working near you if you are undertaking dust generating tasks.



For more information visit the 'useful websites' listed on our silica dust page at: **cancer.org.au/workcancer**