

August 2019

8 KEY THINGS FOR WORKERS TO KNOW

Controlling silica dust in the workplace



- Silicosis is a permanent lung disease.
- Workers manufacturing engineered/artificial stone kitchen benches have died from silicosis.
- Silicosis is caused by breathing tiny particles of respirable crystalline silica (RCS) dust into the lungs.
- RCS dust is created when materials containing crystalline silica are cut, ground, drilled, sanded, or polished.
- **Silicosis is preventable.**

RCS dust can be eliminated by using products that do not contain silica. For example, metallic shot, slag products, or grit instead of sand for abrasive blasting.

There are some things your business/employer can do to minimise the risks of silica dust:

Substitution	1 Use natural stone like marble and limestone. These have a much lower silica content than engineered/artificial stone (as low as 2% compared to 90%).	
Dust control	2 Control dust by on-tool water suppression and/or on-tool extraction and using an H-class HEPA-filtered vacuum cleaner when cleaning up. 3 Choose equipment and machinery with good dust control and dust collection systems. If in doubt, contact the manufacturer.	
Administrative control	4 Schedule potential high-exposure work for times when there are fewer workers and others around (eg breaks or after normal working hours).	
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	5 Provide PPE (eg overalls, gloves and suitable respiratory (breathing) protection) in accordance with the Standards and ensure workers know how to wear, use and store it correctly. Ensure workers are fit tested for any respirator they wear that requires a seal against the face.	

There are some things you, as a worker, can do to minimise the risks of silica dust:

Personal protective equipment (PPE)	<p>6 Wear, use and store PPE correctly and let the business know if it no longer works (eg if it no longer fits properly or is broken). When wearing a respirator that requires a seal against the face, you must be clean shaven to ensure it fits properly, because facial hair or stubble will adversely affect the seal.</p> <p>7 Leave dust-covered work clothes at work to be cleaned. Do not wear them home.</p>	
Personal hygiene	<p>8 Wash hands before eating, drinking or smoking. Wash up before leaving work at the end of the day.</p>	

If you have concerns about exposure to silica dust, talk to the business/employer, Health and Safety representative, or other representative.