

SAFETY TALK



SILICA DUST

Crystalline Silica is a mineral found in many common materials used in the construction, oil, gas, manufacturing and agriculture industries. It is a basic component found in sand and rock, including concrete, mortar, and brick. Silica dust is extremely dangerous and may become airborne by cutting, grinding, drilling, or otherwise disturbing these silica containing materials.

Over time, workers who inhale the dust may be at risk of developing a number of serious illnesses, such as silicosis, an irreversible lung disease, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Silica dust has also been linked to additional sicknesses such as kidney disease, increased risk of getting tuberculosis, and a number of cancers.*

Source: Burden of Occupational Cancer in Canada, September 2019

How do I know if I am at risk?

You can be exposed to silica if you are working with the following materials:

- Concrete, concrete blocks, cement, mortar
- Tiles, brick, masonry
- Granite, sand, fill dirt, and top soil
- Asphalt – containing rock or stone
- Abrasives used for blasting

Silica dust is created by:

- Chipping, sawing, grinding, hammering, drilling of rock, concrete or masonry structures
- Crushing, loading, hauling, dumping
- Building demolition
- Power cutting or dressing stone
- Abrasive or hydroblasting of concrete
- Dry sweeping or pressurized air blowing
- Tunneling, excavating or earth moving



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What precautions should you take?

There are many ways to protect yourself from exposure to silica dust, such as:

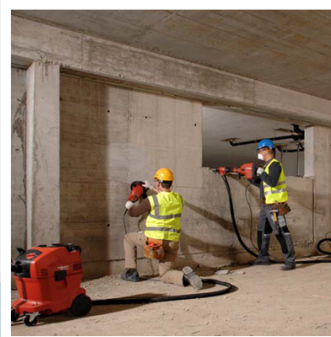
- Where possible, use a vacuum and/or water spray to reduce dust at the source, before it becomes airborne.
- When dust cannot be controlled, wear a respirator.
- If possible, avoid using sand for abrasive blasting. If a less hazardous material is not available, use the appropriate respiratory protection.
- Ensure proper ventilation before beginning the task.
- Wear eye protection, protective clothing and other necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Use good hygiene at work:
 - Wash hands and face before eating, drinking, or smoking outside dusty areas
 - Do not eat, drink, or use tobacco in dusty areas.
 - Park your vehicle where it will not be contaminated with silica.
 - Avoid bringing dust home. Vacuum the dust from your clothes or change into clean clothing before leaving the work site. Do not brush or blow dust off.

*For more information on Silica check out our [Prevention Update - Exposure to Silica Dust](#) on our website.

Using a wet tile saw to limit dust exposure



Using hand tools equipped with dust control solutions



Discussion Topics

- What are some sources of silica at this worksite?
- Have you ever been exposed to silica dust from the work you were doing or from work going on nearby?
- What actions will you take today to reduce or eliminate your exposure to silica?
- Do you have the necessary PPE to protect yourself from silica dust?



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Toll Free 1-800-237-5049
wcb.pe.ca



To report a serious workplace injury, contact the occupational health & safety line at 902-628-7513