

Silica Dust & Silicosis: What Workers Need to Know

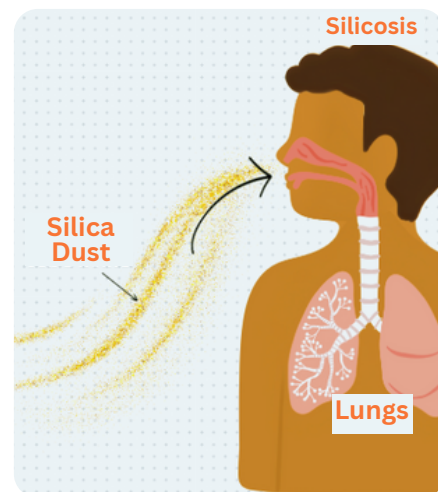
What is Silicosis and Silica Dust?

Silicosis is an incurable lung disease caused by breathing in silica dust that is found in artificial and natural stone, sand, cement, and brick. When these materials are fabricated, they release silica dust into the air. When silica dust is breathed in, it can reach deep into the lungs without causing any problems at first. Workers who breathe in silica dust may not realize there is a problem until years later, but higher exposure can cause silicosis to develop faster.

Symptoms:

- Persistent cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Extreme fatigue and tiredness
- Chest pain
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Fever

Silica dust can also lead to an increased risk of tuberculosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung and kidney disease, cancer, other serious illnesses and death.



If you or someone you know has symptoms of silicosis, see a healthcare provider and mention that you are exposed to silica dust at work. Employers should offer medical exams at no cost for exposed workers. For help finding a provider, call 211 or visit 211LA.org.

Industries with Workers At-High Risk:

- Artificial stone fabrication (cutting, grinding, or drilling stone)
- Construction (demolition, cutting, grinding, or drilling concrete/stone)
- Manufacturing (glass, ceramics, and brick production)
- Mining and quarrying
- Sandblasting

How to Reduce the Risk of Silicosis?

Safe Work Practices

- Always use water to wet or submerge materials before cutting or drilling to reduce silica dust.
- Never cut stone dry.
- Use dust collection tools to capture silica before it spreads in the air.
- Avoid dry sweeping or compressed air for cleaning.
- Do not rotate workers to reduce exposure.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Workers need a proper fit test and medical clearance before using respirators
- Use a full-face, tight-fitting Powered Air-Purifying Respirator (PAPR) approved by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) or another respirator with equal or better protection.



Workers in California, regardless of immigration status, have the right to a safe and healthy workplace. As of December 2024, Cal/OSHA has implemented permanent regulations to keep workers safe from exposure to silica dust. It is illegal to retaliate against workers for reporting health or safety concerns. Report unsafe working conditions to Cal/OSHA at **1-833-579-0927**.



For more information, please visit:



LA County Silicosis Webpage
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/silicosis/>



Cal/OSHA Work Safe with Silica
<https://worksafewithsilica.org/>



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