



Train. Protect. Prevent.

SILICA POISONING

Silica can be found in common construction materials, such as cement and quartz. Most minerals contain silica and when these minerals are chipped, drilled, or cut into, this creates respirable silica dust. Inhaling silica dust causes scar tissue to develop within the lungs that will create a shortness of breath and put that person at an increased risk for lung cancer. Prolonged exposure to silica dust can lead to the health hazard silicosis. We know that it can take years of breathing in respirable silica to cause silicosis, however, a person exposed to large amounts of silica everyday may develop symptoms within a few months.

Working in a mine where employees are disturbing minerals that creates respirable dust can cause silicosis. For these workers, we can provide them with a good fitting, clean respirator that will protect their lungs. Sand blasting can also create respirable silica dust. OSHA recommends finding another type of media to use that would not create silica dust. If that is not an option then it is recommended that workers wear a respirator and when finished with work, employees should vacuum the dust from their clothes and change into clean clothes. A more common type of work that puts people at risk for silicosis is disturbing or mixing concrete by chipping, drilling, and cutting. These actions create an airborne hazard. Much like mixing concrete when it is poured, this creates a lot of dust. One way to minimize this is to pour the concrete in at a slower pace while it is mixing. This will prevent most of the silica from becoming airborne. Workers in these situations should also be wearing a respirator.

There are millions still being put at risk for silicosis everyday. The resources are there to protect workers from this disease. According to OSHA, 300 people die every year from construction-related silicosis. Everybody at risk should be wearing a respirator. Can anyone contribute a time that working with concrete or another mineral was involved in your work? Can anyone recall a near miss or accident that could've been prevented?



Work Site Review: Hazards/Safety Suggestions

Company Name: _____ Work Site Location: _____

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Foreman/Supervisor: _____

Employee Signatures: (continue on back of sheet if necessary)

(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness)

Manager/Supervisor's Signature: _____

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