

HAZARD ALERT

CPWR
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

SILICA



Are you in danger?

Silica can be found in many building materials including...

- concrete
- sand
- mortar
- rock
- and some paints
- masonry

If you do the following to these materials...

- abrasive or sand blast
- grind
- crush or demolish
- drill
- jackhammer
- cut or saw

Then the answer is **YES**.

The **dust** around you contains silica – and breathing it can be **deadly**.



Why it's deadly

You can be in danger even if you don't see the dust.

When you breathe dust that contains silica, the tiny particles damage your lungs.

Silicosis can form in your lungs in as little as a few weeks of very high dust exposure. Even breathing small amounts over time can cause disease years later. By the time it gets hard to breathe, you are already sick and there is no cure for silicosis.

Silica dust also causes lung cancer, increases your chance of getting tuberculosis, and has been linked to COPD and other illnesses.

Find out more about construction hazards.

Get more of these Hazard Alert cards –
and cards on other topics.

Call 301-578-8500

Protect Yourself: Three Methods



1 Use Water

Water can keep silica dust out of the air – and out of your lungs. Use tools with water attachments to control dust at the source. Water can also keep dust down during activities like sweeping and demolition.



2 Use a Vacuum

Use tools with vacuum attachments to capture the dust right where it starts. Dust is drawn into a hood or cover attached to the tool, through a hose, and into a HEPA-filter vacuum. The dust doesn't get into the air – or your lungs.



3 Wear a Respirator

When other controls don't work well enough and your work creates more silica dust than OSHA allows, your employer is required to have a full, written respiratory protection program. Respirators can protect your lungs from dangerous dust.

NOTE: Abrasive blasting and sandblasting cause extreme exposure. You must use a special Type CE respirator.

Find out more about silica:

- www.silica-safe.org, a one-stop resource for information about silica exposures and controls
- www.cpwrConstructionSolutions.org, to find tools and controls for silica dust and other hazards
- www.elcosh.org, for training materials, handouts and more
- www.niosh.gov, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- www.osha.gov/workers.html, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's site for workers



If you think you are in danger:

Contact your supervisor. Contact your union.

Call OSHA
1-800-321-OSHA