

Risk Control Bulletin:

Cut Down Your Silica Exposure



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RISK CONTROL



Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) is a common airborne exposure on construction sites every day. There are several job tasks that produce silica including, but not limited to: blasting, cutting, grinding, tuck-pointing, jackhammering and mixing. OSHA estimates that the new silica standard, — enforcement began September 2017 — will save over 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of Silicosis, lung cancer, COPD and kidney disease caused by silica exposures each year. Per the updated standard, [29 CFR 1926.1153 Respirable Crystalline Silica](#), every jobsite with a potential for silica exposure should have a designated competent person available for assistance and guidance. Know who the competent person is upon arrival at the jobsite, as this is your best resource in the field to assist in controlling exposures and selecting appropriate measures for protection.

Ten tips to reduce your silica exposure on the job

1. If you see a dust cloud from work operations where sand or concrete are present, assume silica is also present. If observed, be aware that actions towards reduction should be in place.
2. Where feasible, perform work in an open space to help minimize your exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS). This acts as a general ventilation method and can assist in reducing overall exposure to silica.
3. If you believe the task you are completing produces RCS, refer to "Table 1" in the OSHA standard.
4. When in doubt, engineer it out. Work control methods such as wetting the process and HEPA filter vacuums may limit the amount of potentially harmful silica dust becoming airborne.
5. Always adhere to your employer's written exposure control plan for silica.
6. Avoid housekeeping practices that may produce or contribute to an increased silica exposure. Use methods like water, sweeping compounds, and vacuum systems with HEPA filters.
7. Refrain from using compressed air while cleaning clothing, equipment, floors and other surfaces.
8. When using tools and equipment, always follow manufacturer specifications for proper use, maintenance, care and cleaning.
9. Always try to eliminate or reduce the hazard first; use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as respirators/dust masks as a last resort.
10. Review all potential RCS exposures with the jobsite competent person prior to beginning work. If you have questions, concerns, or see an uncontrolled operation, reach out to this individual.

Always remember: **You are in charge of your own health and safety.**

To learn more about how CNA's Risk Control services can help you manage your risks and increase efficiencies please visit www.cna.com/riskcontrol.