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.

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