

# NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

January 2024

## SILICA EMERGENCY TEMPORARY STANDARD

On December 14, 2023, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board approved Cal/OSHA's Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) on Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS).

This ETS affects employees working in general industry under California Code of Regulation, Title 8, section 5204. It includes important revisions to protect workers engaged in high-exposure trigger tasks (cutting, grinding, polishing, clean up, etc.) involving artificial stone and natural stone containing more than 10% crystalline silica. **The ETS went into effect on December 29, 2023.**

Cutting, grinding, chipping, sanding, drilling, and polishing stone or engineered stone products can be harmful. These tasks put dangerous levels of silica dust into the air. Silica dust can get far into your lungs and cause a disease called silicosis. Silicosis makes scars in the lungs and leads to trouble breathing.

### Permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica

The PEL for respirable crystalline silica is 50 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$ ) of air. This is the maximum concentration of respirable crystalline silica in air, as an eight-hour time-weighted average, to which an employee may be exposed.



Wet methods are one way to keep dust from getting into the air. "Wet methods" means using tools that spray or pour water on the stone you are working on. Using dust-catching (capture) systems along with wet methods is even safer.

### How to keep safe at work.

- Train about silica, how it affects your health, and how to work safely
- Assess the airborne silica exposures in your workplace
- Make sure the dust-capture system pulls the dust away from you.
- Learn how to clean and maintain your dust reduction systems.
- Keep the surface wet enough so it does not dry out while you are working.
- Make sure water is pointed at the part of the stone you are working on. Add more water if needed. Sometimes you can use a hose to keep water flowing.
- To clean up dust, use wet sweeping or vacuums that have high efficiency (HEPA) filters. It is not safe to dry sweep or use compressed air to clean surfaces or clothes.
- Inspect, clean, store, and wear your respirator correctly.

### Symptoms

Silicosis often presents with non-specific respiratory symptoms, such as cough and shortness of breath; you may also be asymptomatic in early stages of disease.

### Sources

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/respiratory-silica-FAQ.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/nora/councils/resp/webinars.html>



### Contact Us

(707) 428-1830

[www.nbsia.org](http://www.nbsia.org)

[MemberServices@nbsia.org](mailto:MemberServices@nbsia.org)