



## **WORKING WITH SILICA DUST**

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## Introduction

Silica dust is now well recognised to be harmful in a construction environment. Each year, over 1,000 UK workers die as a consequence of inhaling Silica. The dust is created in many processes where products containing sand and stone are cut, broken or even in cleaning activities. When inhaled the dust particles, which are 100 times smaller than a grain of sand, can easily find their way into lungs.

Any exposure to silica dust can result in the development of lung cancer, silicosis (an irreversible scarring and stiffening of the lungs), problems with kidneys and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).

The FPS have collated a series of external resources for reference purposes to help members mitigate this significant risk.

## What is Silica?



Silica is a natural substance found in varying amounts in most rocks, sand and clay. Silica is also a major constituent of construction materials such as bricks, tiles, concrete and mortar.

When dust is generated, for example through cutting or drilling, some of this dust is fine enough to get deep into your lungs. The fine dust is known as respirable crystalline silica (RCS). It is commonly called silica or silica dust.

In addition to the risks from lung cancer, silica is also linked to other serious lung diseases including [Silicosis](#) and [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](#).

The following is a list of references that provide information about the risks it poses to construction workers, and information to employers on how to prevent or adequately control the risks from Silica.

## Legislation

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended) Approved Code of Practice: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l5.pdf>.

## HSE Guidance

- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.pdf>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/lung-disease/silicosis.htm>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/occupational-disease/cancer/silica.htm>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/cancer-and-construction/silica-dust.htm>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/direct-advice/construction-silica.htm>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis36.pdf>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis54.pdf>

## Respiratory Protection

This link is to HSE guidance relating to the use of respiratory equipment at work:  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg53.htm>.

This guidance gives advice on RPE fit testing for the employer and those conducting fit tests:  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg479.htm>.

## Health Surveillance

This guidance which forms part of COSHH Essentials contains advice on health surveillance for silicosis caused by respirable crystalline silica (RCS):  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g404.pdf>.

## Guidance for Employees

This leaflet published by the HSE provides guidance to employees, explaining what they, and their employer should do to prevent lung disease caused by exposure to silica at work:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg463.htm>.

## Industry Guidance & Campaigns

IOSH Campaign to beat Occupational Cancer:

- <https://www.notimetolose.org.uk/>
- [https://www.notimetolose.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Factsheet\\_Respirable\\_crystalline\\_silica\\_the\\_facts\\_MKT2730.pdf](https://www.notimetolose.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Factsheet_Respirable_crystalline_silica_the_facts_MKT2730.pdf)

The CITB & Construction Dust Partnership:

- <https://www.citb.co.uk/about-citb/partnerships-and-initiatives/construction-dust-partnership/>

The British Occupational Hygiene Society:

- <https://www.breathefreely.org.uk/>

Code of Practice (CoP) for the management of exposure to construction dust in the hire industry:

- <https://www.citb.co.uk/global/health%20and%20safety/hae%20dust%20in%20the%20workplace%20cop.pdf>