

What's the issue?

Construction activities can create airborne dust, especially from materials such as wood, stone and concrete. Dust from the ground itself can also be problematic especially when the ground is very dry, this can be further exacerbated when disturbed by vehicle and large plant movements.

What should we be concerned about?

The obvious initial impact is when dusts irritates your skin, eyes and throat but, the greater concern is what dust can do once breathed in, and how it may affect your lungs.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is an overall term for lung diseases that inflame the airways and obstruct breathing. It includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema and is the 5th biggest killer in UK. - If your exposed to dust on a regular basis you may be at risk of developing COPD.

Silicosis is caused by the inhalation of respirable crystalline silica, know more commonly as Silica dust. This can be so small its actually invisible to the naked eye and can be found in concrete and other construction materials such as those used to construct a piling mat..

Many of these ill health affects take long periods of time develop so its not immediately obvious when dust is causing harm.

What are symptoms to look out for

Short term affects on the lungs can be coughing, wheezing, difficulty in breathing and general irritation of the nasal and respiratory tract. There may also be an increased production of mucus and mucus may become discoloured – These may take hours to appear after exposure.

Long-term symptoms may include a persistent hoarse cough, regular chest infections and an increased shortness of breath, even when performing simple tasks, such as walking up stairs, carrying light loads. These symptoms could indicate COPD or other diseases such as silicosis.

What can we do to prevent our exposure to dust

When operating small tools try to use them in well ventilated areas, ensure to use a form of dust extraction (such as a vacuum) and use water suppression whenever possible.

Keep surfaces clean and dampen them down regularly.

Lower and enforce vehicle speed limits to and around site.

Sheet over vehicles carrying dry aggregates to and from site .

Dampen down aggregate and minimise drop heights into haulage vehicles.

Positon stockpiles away from residential areas and watercourses.

Monitor dust suppression systems to ensure they are working and effective.

Did you Know?

Dust is not always an obvious hazard because the particles that do the most damage are not visible to the human eye and the health effects can take years to develop.

The long term effects of exposure to dust can be permanent and do disabling damage to the lungs and severely affect your quality of life



Q: What are the short term symptoms of exposure to dust?

Q: What can you do to reduce dust levels on site?