



OSHA Releases Final Rule on Silica

OSHA issued a final rule aimed to reduce the occurrence of lung cancer, silicosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in America's workforce by reducing their crystalline silica exposure. This rule is made up of two standards: Construction and General Industry/Maritime.

OSHA estimates this new rule will prevent more than 900 cases of silicosis each year and save over 600 lives. Each year approximately 2.3 million workers are exposed to crystalline silica. In the construction industry exposure occurs through drilling, cutting or grinding silica containing materials such as concrete and stone. In general industry operations such as brick manufacturing, foundries and hydraulic fracking can lead to crystalline silica exposure. Methods that have been used by responsible employers for year to control respirable crystalline silica are water or vacuum systems.

This final rule will reduce the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an eight hour day. This new PEL is approximately 50% of the previous general industry standard and 20% of the construction industry standard.

Lexington

1405 Mercer Road
Lexington, KY 40511
859-231-8936
859-231-8997 fax

Louisville

1860 B Williamson Court
Louisville, KY 40223
502-587-6482
502-587-6572 fax

Employers are now required to use engineering controls (water or ventilation) to mitigate worker exposure. Respirators must be provided when engineering controls cannot adequately control exposure. A written exposure plan must be developed along with medical exams to highly exposed workers and training.

Both standards in the final rule take place on June 23, 2016. The construction industry must be in compliance by within one year of the effective date and General Industry and Maritime two years after the compliance date.

For more information on this final rule visit:
<https://www.osha.gov/silica/>

