

TOOLBOX TALK #9

AVOIDING SILICA EXPOSURE FROM FIBER CEMENT SIDING

Do you work with fiber cement siding, either with installing it or removing it? A simple solution could allow construction workers to reduce their exposure to crystalline silica when cutting fiber cement siding according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Researchers have found that crystalline silica measurements dropped below the NIOSH recommended exposure limit when workers attached a regular shop vacuum to a dust-collecting circular saw.

The result proved true in laboratory evaluations and field surveys.

NIOSH has issued recommended controls pertaining to local exhaust ventilation systems, circular saws, circular saw blades, work practices and respirators. Researchers recommend that workers who cut fiber-cement siding use a shop vacuum with an airflow rate that is at least 30 cubic feet per minute. A vacuum hose with an inner diameter of 1-1/4 inches or more may be used to attach the circular saw to the shop vacuum. The measure could help workers avoid breathing in dust that contains crystalline silica, which can lead to silicosis – a deadly lung disease.

Crystalline silica is found in fiber cement siding, which has increased sharply in popularity in the past two decades because it requires less maintenance than wood siding.

