

## TOOLBOX TALK #11

### **AVOID EXPOSURE TO DRY-CUTTING DUST**

When workers cut or grind concrete, brick or stone, the resulting dust may contain crystalline silica. According to many governmental health experts, when workers inhale crystalline silica dust, silica particles can scar the lungs and cause a disabling and incurable lung disease called silicosis.

However, silicosis is preventable if the right precautions are taken. The experts recommend employers and employees take the following steps to prevent crystalline silica dust exposure:

- Recognize when crystalline silica dust may be created, and plan ahead to eliminate or control it.
- Provide training to employees about the health effects of crystalline silica, as well as work practices and personal protective equipment needed to stay safe from the dust.
- Use exhaust ventilation with dust collectors or wet methods to prevent release of dust in the air.
- Maintain dust control systems to keep them in good working condition.
- Use vacuums with HEPA filters and practice wet sweeping instead of dry sweeping.
- Use proper respiratory protection. Respirators should not be the primary method of protection; they should be used if engineering controls cannot keep dust levels below NIOSH recommended exposure limits.
- Wear disposable or washable protective clothing.
- If possible, shower and change into clean clothes before leaving the worksite to prevent contamination of cars, homes and other work areas.
- Minimize exposure to nearby workers by marking and posting the boundaries or work areas where exposure to dust can occur.
- Conduct air monitoring to measure worker exposures and ensure controls are providing adequate protection.
- Provide annual medical examinations for all workers who may be exposed to crystalline silica.

