

TOOLBOX TALK #6

SILICA

Are you in danger? Silica can be found in many building materials including sand, rock, masonry, concrete, mortar and some paints.

If you do the following to these materials ... abrasive or sandblast, cut or saw, jackhammer, grind, drill, crush or demolish ...



Then the answer is YES! The dust around use contains silica – and breathing it can be deadly.

Protecting yourself – Three methods:

1. Water can keep silica dust out of the air – and out of your lungs. Use tools with water attachments to control dust at the source. Water can also keep dust down during activities like sweeping and demolition.
2. Use tools with vacuum attachments to capture the dust right where it starts. Dust is drawn into a hood or cover attached to the tool, through a hose, and into a HEPA-filter vacuum. The dust doesn't get into the air – or your lungs.
3. When other controls don't work well enough and your work creates more silica dust than OSHA allows, your employer is required to have a full, written respiratory protection program. Respirators can protect your lungs from dangerous dust.

Why it's deadly...

You can be in danger even if you don't see the dust.

When you breathe dust that contains silica, the tiny particles damage your lungs. Silicosis can form in your lungs in as little as a few weeks of very high dust exposure. Even breathing small amounts over time can cause disease years later. By the time it gets hard to breathe, you are already sick and there is no cure for silicosis.

Silica dust also causes lung cancer, increasing your chance of getting tuberculosis and has been linked to COPD and other illnesses.