What's in the Silica Emergency Temporary Standard

In California, there is an **epidemic of silicosis**, a preventable deadly lung disease, among workers in the engineered stone industry. On December 29, 2023, **new requirements in the Cal/OSHA silica general industry standard** came into effect for workers in the artificial and natural stone industries and in other non-construction businesses where workers are exposed to silica dust. The **Cal/OSHA construction silica regulations have not changed**.

The revisions add protections for workers exposed to silica dust in general industry, as shown in the first section below. Workers who perform high-exposure trigger tasks on artificial and natural stone are subject to stricter requirements, which are described starting on page 2..

Requirements for all silica dust-generating tasks

- Do an exposure assessment with silica dust **air monitoring** for any task that creates silica dust.
- Notify your employees of the air testing results; you may need to do additional sampling based on your results.
- Provide medical exams for employees who are exposed to silica dust above the Cal/OSHA Action Limit (AL) for 30 or more days per year. The exam must be offered within 30 days of starting employment, and then at least every 3 years thereafter.

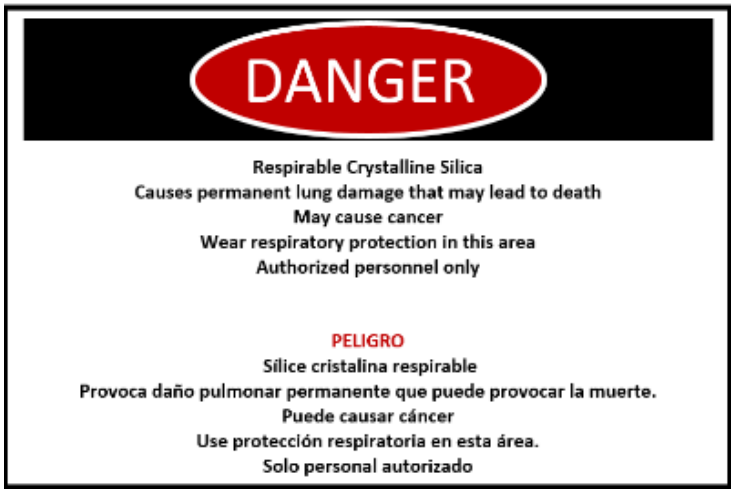
Cal/OSHA Exposure Limits for Respirable Crystalline Silica Dust

Action Level (AL)* = 0.025 mg/m^3 Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL)* = 0.05 mg/m^3

*for an 8-Hour time-weighted average (TWA) sample

- Protect workers from silica dust exposures by implementing these housekeeping practices::
  - Prohibit dry sweeping/brushing and the use of compressed air for any purpose
  - Using engineering and work practice controls to keep employee exposure to silica dust at or below the Cal/OSHA permissible exposure limits.
  - Providing workers with appropriate respiratory protection if feasible controls cannot control exposures or trigger tasks require it (see section below)
- Include respirable crystalline silica in your company's **Hazard Communication program.**
- Train your employees so they understand the silica training topics required by the new regulation.
- Establish and implement a written Silica Exposure Control Plan
  - Depending on your operations, you may use one of State Fund's Silica Exposure Control Plan Templates:
    - **Silica Program Template (Artificial and Natural Stone Industries)**
    - **Silica Program Template (General, Non-Stone Industries)**
  - Update plan annually and make it always available for staff to read.

- Set up regulated areas with limited access, identified by warning signs in areas where employees perform tasks that expose them to silica dust above the Cal/OSHA exposure limit, and whenever employees perform high-exposure trigger tasks (see definition on next page)



What is a high-exposure trigger task?

Tasks that include **machining, crushing, cutting, drilling, abrading, abrasive blasting, grinding, chiseling, carving, gouging, polishing, buffing, fracturing, intentional breaking, or intentional chipping** of **artificial stone** (containing more than 0.1% crystalline silica) and **natural stone** (containing more than 10% crystalline silica).

Also includes cleanup, disturbing, or handling of wastes, dusts, residues, debris, or other materials created during the above listed tasks

Additional requirements for high-exposure trigger tasks:

- Require that all employees performing trigger tasks wear a full-face tight fitting powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) with Assigned Protection Factor (APF) of 1,000, or a respirator providing equal or greater protection.
- Implement *mandatory* practices to effectively suppress silica dust by wet methods, ensuring water covers the entire surface of a work object where a tool contacts it by one of these methods:
    - Apply continuous, appropriate volumes of water
    - Submerse the work object under water
    - Water jet cutting
- Implement *mandatory* housekeeping and maintenance practices to protect workers from silica dust by:
    - Ensuring prompt cleanup of dust and debris, and placing the waste material into leak-tight containers/bags
    - Using only wet methods or high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuums to collect waste
    - Prohibiting these practices:
        - Use of compressed air for any purpose
        - Dry sweeping, brushing, shoveling, disturbing, or any other dry clean-up of wastes, dusts, debris or any material that may contain silica dust
        - Use of employee rotation to reduce worker exposure to silica dust
        - Walking or moving equipment on or through any material that may contain silica dust
    - Ensuring that employees engaged in housekeeping tasks wear PAPRs
    - Providing readily available washing facilities

- Conduct initial air monitoring and follow-up monitoring at least every 12 months to ensure that silica controls are working properly. You may need to monitor more often if exposures are above the Action Level.

Take these actions to avoid having your business shut down by Cal/OSHA due to imminent silica hazards:

For all businesses with silica exposures:

- Ensure your employees wear respiratory protection as required.
- Set up a compliant **respiratory protection program**.
- **Report** your employees' silica dust exposures to the Cal/OSHA Carcinogen Unit.
- Report if your employees have silicosis or silica-related cancer **to Cal/OSHA** and to the **California Department of Public Health (CDPH)**.

For businesses with high-exposure trigger tasks:

- Use wet methods to suppress silica dust.
- Ensure employees performing trigger tasks wear PAPR's.
- Prohibit use of compressed air and dry sweeping.
- Don't allow employees to walk through silica dust residues.
- Forbid the use of employee rotation to reduce worker exposures.