

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION SHEET SILICA DUST

This information sheet is written primarily for employees and safety representatives to raise awareness about health and safety in the workplace.

**A CLEAN AIR SITE IS
A WORKERS RIGHT**



SILICA DUST (RCS) WHAT IS IT?

Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) is a natural substance found in varying amounts in most rocks, sand and clay. Silica is also a major constituent of construction materials such as bricks, tiles, concrete, mortar and engineered stone.

Silica dust is a serious hazard to construction workers. Working with these materials can create a very fine dust that can be easily breathed in, which can cause serious long term health issues if not properly managed.



WHAT DISEASES CAN SILICA DUST CAUSE?

Silica dust can cause serious lung disease such as silicosis and cancer. Once inside the lungs, it may cause swelling (inflammation) and gradually lead to areas of hardened and scarred lung tissue (fibrosis). Even small amounts can cause this damage.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Silicosis can occur after only a few months of heavy exposure without proper control measures in place. The symptoms of silicosis could include persistent cough, shortness of breath and extreme tiredness.



TOP TIPS FOR REDUCING SILICA DUST

To control the spread of silica dust use the correct equipment for example:

- use tools and equipment that have on-tool extraction to collect dust when cutting, drilling or chasing,
- use water suppression where possible (non-electric tools) e.g. concrete saws,
- use paver and block splitters instead of cutting,
- use wet/dry vacuums with HEPA filter to gather up dust,
- dampen down areas before cleaning taking into account electrical equipment.



DUST MASKS (RPE)

Respiratory protective equipment or RPE is your last line of defence. If RPE is required it should be a:

- reusable half or full face respirator mask with P3 filter, or
- disposable FFP3 Respirator Mask.

Always check your mask and ensure it is marked as FFP3 or P3 and it is CE marked. Masks should fit correctly and persons using them should be trained on how to use and when to change them.



Reusable half or full face respirator mask with P3 filter



Disposable Respirator Mask FFP3

EMPLOYEE SUPPORTS

Since 2004, the Construction Workers Health Trust (CWHT) have provided health checks for more than 75,000 Irish construction workers at their own workplaces. The CWHT uses the most up to date portable diagnostic equipment. All test results are given to the worker on the spot. Every worker also receives a 'Good Health Booklet' which gives an explanation of all test results.

Construction Workers Health Trust

Tel: 01-7093070
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Need Help?

The Lighthouse Club, the Construction Industry Charity provides FREE emotional, physical and financial wellbeing support to the construction community and their families. If you or anyone you know is struggling, reach out for free and confidential support 24/7.

The Lighthouse Club

Tel: 1800 939 122
Text: HARDHAT to 50808
Web: www.constructionindustryhelpline.com



FURTHER INFORMATION

HSA.ie | BeSMART.ie | hsalearning.ie

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