



# Safety Tip of the Week

## Respirable Silica Dust Standard for Construction

Workers in construction are at risk for exposure to crystalline silica, a common mineral found in construction materials like concrete, brick, mortar, sand, and stone. If you have ever seen a sidewalk being jackhammered, and concrete dust blowing in the air, you have probably seen respirable crystalline silica. When workers cut, crush, saw, grind, or perforate these types of materials, very small airborne particles are created. These “respirable” particles can travel deep into workers’ lungs. Each year, about two million construction workers are exposed to crystalline silica at over 600,000 job sites.



Silica dust can cause silicosis, lung cancer, obstructive chronic pulmonary disease, and kidney disease. Generally, these occur after years of prolonged exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

### The OSHA Standard

The OSHA Standard that addresses Crystalline Silica in Construction is 29 CFR 1926.1153. This standard requires employers to limit worker exposure to crystalline silica and/or provide engineering and work practice control methods for specific equipment and tasks. [Table 1](#) of the construction standard matches eighteen common construction tasks that involve dust with effective control methods. Required respiratory protection and minimum protection factors are listed for more and less than 4-hour exposures for each task. If employers do NOT use Table 1 of the standard for guidance, they are REQUIRED to determine the amount of silica that workers are being exposed to and find alternate exposure control methods.

### Additional Requirements

Independent of control methods, all employers in the construction industry are required to establish and implement additional requirements such as a written exposure control plan, a competent person to oversee it, restricting cleaning practices that expose workers to silica, offering medical exams to high-risk employees, training workers about silica, and keeping records of workers’ silica exposure and medical exams.

***DON'T TAKE A CHANCE...GIVE TABLE 1 A GLANCE!***