TOOLBOX TALK

Silica Dust

Topic	Silica Dust	Attendees	0

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT

When you cut, grind or drill concrete, brick, tile or stone, you make a fine dust you cannot see that goes deep into your lungs. Breathing it causes silicosis, lung cancer and kidney disease, and the damage cannot be undone. The dust that hurts you is the dust you cannot see, so we control it every time.

1. Silica is in concrete, bricks, pavers, tiles, mortar, render, natural stone and engineered stone.
2. Engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs have been banned in Australia since 1 July 2024. Work on existing engineered stone still needs strict controls and must be notified to the regulator first.
3. The exposure standard is 0.05 mg/m3 over 8 hours. That is a tiny amount: a pinch of fine dust spread through a room can be enough to go over it.
4. Plan the job to make less dust: order materials cut to size, use block splitters, and choose tools that do not need cutting at all.
5. Control dust at the source: use water suppression or on-tool extraction connected to the right class vacuum every time you cut.
6. Check the extraction is working before you start: hose connected, filter clean, bag not full and the flow alarm not going off.
7. Keep the water running on wet cutters. A dry blade on a wet saw makes as much dust as a dry saw.
8. Wear at least a fitted P2 respirator as well as using water or extraction.
9. Tight fitting masks need a fit test and a clean shave. Stubble breaks the seal.
10. Never dry sweep or blow dust off with compressed air. Use a vacuum or wet clean up.
11. Cut in the open or away from others, and keep people out of the dust cloud.
12. Change out of dusty clothes before you go home, and wash hands and face before eating.
13. Ask about health monitoring if you regularly cut or grind these materials.
14. Silicosis can show up years after the work, and early on you feel fine. By the time you are short of breath, the damage is done.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CREW

1. Which materials on this job contain silica?
2. What dust controls are on the tools we are using today?
3. When were you last fit tested for your mask?
4. How should we clean up the dust at the end of the day?
5. Who else is working near our cutting today, and how do we keep them out of the dust?

Reference: WHS Regulations, Chapter 7 (Hazardous chemicals) and the engineered stone prohibition from 1 July 2024

RUN BY

	Name	Signature	Date	
Presenter				

ATTENDANCE

Name	Role / company	Signature	Date

Name	Role / company	Signature	Date

Keep this record with your site safety file.