



Respirable Crystalline Silica

Final Rules, Effective Date April 23, 2018

Key Provisions

- Reduces the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift.
- Requires employers to: use engineering controls (such as water or ventilation) to limit worker exposure to the PEL; provide respirators when engineering controls cannot adequately limit exposure; limit worker access to high exposure areas; develop a written exposure control plan, offer medical exams to highly exposed workers, and train workers on silica risks and how to limit exposures.
- Provides medical exams to monitor highly exposed workers and gives them information about their lung health.

The standard requires employers to limit worker exposures to respirable crystalline silica and to take other steps to protect workers. Employers can either use a control method laid out in Table 1 of the construction standard (Table 1 matches common construction tasks with dust control methods, so employers know what they need to do to limit worker exposures to silica), or they can measure workers' exposure to silica and independently decide which dust controls work best to limit exposures to the PEL in their workplaces.

Regardless of which exposure control method you choose, all construction employers covered by the standard are required to:

- Establish and implement a **written exposure control plan** that identifies tasks that involve exposure and methods used to protect workers, including procedures to restrict access to work areas where high exposures may occur.
- Designate a **competent** person to implement the written exposure control plan.
- Restrict **housekeeping** practices that expose workers to silica where feasible alternatives are available.
- Offer **medical exams**—including chest X-rays and lung function tests—every three years for workers who are required by the standard to wear a respirator for 30 or more days per year.
- **Train workers** on work operations that result in silica exposure and ways to limit exposure.
- **Keep records** of workers' silica exposure and medical exams.

If you have further questions, please contact Codes & Regulations Manager Al Audette at 360-352-7800.