



Hazards of Silica Dust

Crystalline silica is a common mineral in the earth's crust, and is found in many types of rock including sand, quartz, and granite. Silica is present in both work and non-work environments. When you inhale crystalline silica the lung tissue reacts by developing fibrous tissue around trapped silica particles. This lung condition is called silicosis.

Silica is not often thought of as being a component in Life Science operations. However silica is often used as an intermediate to aid powder flow in tablet production. And silica is often used in the production of various medical products such as medical tubing, as well as laboratory products for analytical chemistry including chromatography.

Always Ensure Appropriate Protection When Silica Exposure is Possible

- Keep awareness high—the key to preventing silicosis. Recognize when silica dust may be generated and plan ahead to eliminate or control the dust at the source.
- Use proper respiratory protection when point of operation controls cannot keep exposures below the recommended exposure limit.
- Use dust control systems when they are available and keep them well maintained.
- Be aware that high silica concentrations can occur inside and outside enclosed areas during operations
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in areas where silica dust is being generated.
- Wear disposable or washable over-garments at the work site.
- Wash your hands and face before eating, drinking, or smoking and vacuum (don't blow) dust from your clothing.
- Shower if possible and change into clean clothes before leaving the job site to prevent contamination of cars, homes, and other work areas.

Airborne dust and dirt is common at worksites. Fortunately, the body's respiratory system does a good of job filtering out normal dust and most foreign bodies. Fine particulates such as asbestos and silica, however, are so tiny they can get past our filtering system. This may cause serious lung problems over an extended period of time if protection or controls are not used.

**Respect these tiny invaders.
Use your personal protective equipment and follow safety precautions.**

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