

# Safety Notice – Crystalline Silica Dust

Date of issue: Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025

In February 2025, Henley have seen an increase in uncontrolled cutting/grinding of products containing silica resulting in 5 x Safety Instruction Notices (SIN) to individuals and companies that have breached the rules on our sites in Victoria alone. Each breach is adding to the risk of an individual developing serious health issues further in life.

**This applies to anyone cutting/grinding/drilling products containing Crystalline Silica**

## What is crystalline silica?

Silica is a naturally occurring mineral that forms the major component of most rocks and soils. Silica dust or respirable crystalline silica (RCS) is generated in processing such as cutting, drilling, grinding, sawing or polishing natural stone or man-made products that contain silica.

## Which products contain crystalline silica?

Some of the products containing crystalline silica include; stone products (natural or engineered marble or granite benchtops), bricks, mortar, cement, fibre cement products, pavers, tiles (including roof tiles), grout.

## Activities that release RCS into the air?

- Fabrication, installation, maintenance and removal of engineered stone countertops.
- Paving and surfacing.
- Construction labouring and demolition.
- Brick, concrete, tile, or stone cutting; especially using dry methods.
- Angle grinding, jack hammering and chiseling of concrete or masonry.
- Clean up activities such as sweeping or pressurised air blowing of dust.

Dangers	Control Measures	Responsibility
<p>A worker can be exposed to high levels of silica dust with short exposure, moderate levels over time or long-term exposure to lower levels. A worker who is exposed to and breaths in RCS could develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acute silicosis which causes sever inflammation and an outpouring of protein into the lungs.</li><li>• Accelerated silicosis causes inflammation, scarring and protein in the lungs.</li><li>• Chronic silicosis causes scarring of the lungs, shortness of breath and progressive massive fibrosis.</li><li>• Chronic bronchitis</li><li>• Emphysema</li><li>• Lung cancer</li><li>• Liver damage</li><li>• Scleroderma – a disease of connective tissue resulting in the formation of scar tissue in skin, joints and other organs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uncontrolled cutting, grinding, trimming, sanding, abrasive polishing using power tools must be controlled using:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ a water suppression (wet cutting) system</li><li>○ an on-tool dust extraction system</li></ul></li><li>• The use of properly fitted respiratory protective equipment.</li><li>• Controlled cutting should take place in a well-ventilated area.</li><li>• Maintain equipment and keep it in good working order.</li><li>• Work must be undertaken as per your Safe Work Method Statement, and it <b>must</b> contain control measures for dust suppression.</li></ul> <p><b>Please Note: uncontrolled cutting of products containing RCS is not permitted on Henley sites.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure the use of the appropriate water suppression or dust extraction tool to control the dust when cutting, grinding, trimming, sanding, polishing products that contain silica.</li><li>• Ensure you and your workers wear the appropriate PPE including a properly fitted respiratory mask.</li><li>• Check Safety Data Sheets are provided by suppliers of products containing silica.</li><li>• If you see uncontrolled cutting, grinding, trimming, sanding, abrasive polishing using power tools please report it to the site supervisor or member of the HSE team.</li></ul> <p><b>For further information please visit <a href="#">SafeWork Australia - Working with Silica</a></b></p>

**Remember - If cutting, grinding, sanding, drilling silica containing products or carrying out any activities that release silica dust into the air then you must have control measures to minimise exposure to yourself and others and you must conduct the work as per your Safe Work Method Statement.**

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