



February 27, 2020

Dear Employer:

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has established a revised National Emphasis Program (NEP) to identify and reduce or eliminate worker exposures to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) in general industry, maritime, and construction. The NEP will use a combination of outreach and targeted enforcement to ensure that employers provide a safe workplace for their employees. The NEP targets specific industries expected to have the highest numbers of workers exposed to silica, and focuses on enforcement of the new silica standards for general industry and maritime (29 CFR § 1910.1053) and for construction (29 CFR § 1926.1153). These standards became effective in June 2016. Construction employers were required to begin complying with their standard as of September 23, 2017, and general industry and maritime employers were required to begin complying with their standard as of June 23, 2018.

What is silica and why is OSHA focusing on it?

Respirable crystalline silica consists of small silica particles that are generated by cutting, sawing, grinding, drilling, and crushing materials such as stone, rock, concrete, brick, block, and mortar. Inhaling the dust created during these operations can cause silicosis, an incurable lung disease, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. For more information on the health effects from silica exposure, and how employers can protect workers, visit OSHA's Safety and Health Topics webpage on Crystalline Silica at:

<https://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/silicacrystalline/index.html>

What changes were made to the NEP?

- Revised application to the lower permissible exposure limit for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) as an 8-hour time-weighted average in general industry, maritime, and construction;
- Updated list of target industries, as listed in the appendix of the NEP; from this list, area offices will develop randomized establishment lists of employers in their local jurisdictions for targeted inspections;
- Compliance safety and health officers will refer to current enforcement guidance for respirable crystalline silica inspection procedures and
- State Plans must participate because of the nationwide exposures to silica.

To help employers in their efforts to identify and correct exposure to respirable crystalline silica, the Fort Lauderdale Area Office is available to answer questions and concerns that you may have.

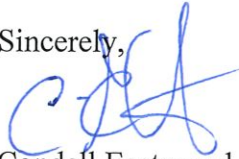
OSHA also funds a free Consultation Service under Section 21(d) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act for small employers. The 21(d) Consultation Service helps employers identify and correct hazardous conditions at their worksites, as well as improve occupational safety and health management systems. These programs are well-staffed with highly-trained safety and health professionals. To schedule an on-site consultation visit, please contact your local 21(d) Consultation Program at <https://www.osha.gov/consultation> where you can click on your state to find out who administers your consultation program.

The NEP began on February 4, 2020 with a 90-day period of compliance assistance for stakeholders prior to beginning programmed inspections under the NEP. During this time, OSHA will also continue to investigate complaints, referrals, hospitalizations, and fatalities related to silica.

Silica is one of the most abundant minerals on the planet and when it is cut, sawed, grinded on, drilled or crushed it can release respirable particles that can lead to silicosis or cancer. To help prevent this, the OSHA standard contains straight forward common sense approaches to controlling this exposure.

Thank you for your interest in protecting the safety and health of your workforce.

Sincerely,



Condell Eastmond
Area Director