
Respirable crystalline silica can be generated in mining, commercial sand/silica handling and construction work with concrete or masonry – even when dust doesn't look heavy.

What's the best first step to reduce respirable silica exposure?

- A. Put on a respirator and begin work.
- B. Use engineering controls at the source.
- C. Work faster to finish sooner.
- D. Dry sweep or blow down with compressed air.

Answer at the end of the email.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SILICA



Silica (quartz) is common in many ores and aggregates, so respirable dust can be generated across mining, commercial material handling and construction. Exposure can lead to irreversible disease, including silicosis. Focus on controlling dust at the source.

- **Where exposure occurs – Routine operations:** Mining, drilling, blasting, crushing, screening, conveying and loading. Also includes commercial sand handling and construction cutting or grinding of concrete and masonry.
- **Where exposure peaks – Highest-risk conditions:** Coal mining; dry processing at crushers, screens and transfer points, dusty haul roads and housekeeping that re-suspends dust such as dry sweeping or compressed air; bulk sand handling, bag dumping and indoor cutting or grinding without ventilation.

- **Mining – Reduce dust at source:** Use wet suppression systems, local exhaust ventilation and dust collection at crushers, screens and transfer points. Enclose dusty processes and maintain sealed equipment cabs with effective filtration.
- **Commercial material handling – Contain and clean safely:** Enclose transfer points and use HEPA vacuum systems for cleanup. Avoid dry sweeping or compressed air that reintroduces dust.
- **Construction – Manage cutting and grinding:** Use water-fed tools or shrouds connected to HEPA vacuums. Isolate indoor work areas and ensure proper ventilation. Respirators may be required but are supplemental.

For more on Silica Exposure, review our Rockwood Toolbox Talks:

- [Dust and Fumes](#)
- [Silicosis](#)

SAFETY TIPS OF THE MONTH



Silica Tips

Follow these tips to help avoid incident or injury:

- **Controls first:** Verify water sprays and dust collectors before mining, crushing, screening, cutting or grinding.
- **Housekeeping:** No dry sweeping or compressed air; use wet cleanup or HEPA vacs.
- **Contain dust:** Keep cab doors/windows shut; isolate and ventilate indoor work.
- **Respirators:** Use only when required; ensure correct type, fit-test and care.

TIPS AND RESOURCES



OSHA, MSHA and other resources:

- [MSHA Silica Regulations](#) | MSHA
(Note: Enforcement of the 2024 MSHA Silica Rule (30 CFR Part 60) is currently stayed indefinitely for all mine operators as of April 2026 due to judicial review.)
- [OSHA Silica Fact Sheet](#) | OSHA
- [CDC Silica and Worker Health](#) | CDC
- **Train and plan.** Identify silica tasks before starting. Confirm water suppression, shrouds/HEPA vacs, dust collectors and ventilation are working.
- **Maintain controls and monitor health.** Clear clogged nozzles, repair leaks/ducting and check water flow, shroud fit, hoses and HEPA filters or bags. Report symptoms early and participate in any required exposure monitoring and medical surveillance.



Promote safety with these videos: Search the SKUs below to find these highlights and additional videos in your [Streamery](#) library, included with your policy.

- **Silica Safety in Industrial and Construction Environments:** 16 min / SKU: 3598/English & Spanish
- **Crystalline Silica Employee Training:** 15 min / SKU: 8356/English & Spanish



Free Seat Belt Covers for Your Employees

Enforce employee seatbelt use with these high visibility seatbelt covers, courtesy of Rockwood.

Email: safetyolutions@rockwoodcasualty.com to request yours. Be sure to specify orange or yellow.



Coming in June – National Safety Month

Get ready for a series of focused newsletters, practical tools, and training resources designed to reinforce safe work practices. Use these to strengthen your programs, engage teams, and keep safety top of mind all month long.

QUESTIONS? REACH OUT!

We're here to help you promote safety in the workplace. [Contact Rockwood Loss Control](#) for any support you need.

Thank you for your continued partnership,

Rockwood Loss Control Team

Safetysolutions@rockwoodcasualty.com



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ANSWER



What's the best first step to reduce respirable silica exposure?

B. Apply and maintain engineering controls at the source – wet methods, local exhaust ventilation and dust collection – before relying on respirators.



(Missed a previous email? [Click here](#) to see an archive of previous months' safety emails on Rockwood's Loss Control website).

