



PREVENTING SILICOSIS

Toolbox Talks for the members of Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities

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Silicosis is a chronic, incurable lung disease caused by breathing in small particles of silica dust. Under a microscope, these small particles of silica look like small razor blades and when inhaled, they act like them, too. Silica dust causes scar tissue and swelling of the lung's lymph nodes that cut down on your ability to breathe.

Silica is one of the most common naturally occurring elements on earth and is found in 2 forms—crystalline and non-crystalline. Sand and quartz are common examples of crystalline silica.

Materials that contain crystalline silica, like concrete, block, tile, mortar or rock, are not hazardous unless they are disturbed. Blasting, cutting, chipping, drilling and grinding these and other materials that contain silica can result in small particles of silica dust that is hazardous for people to breathe.

Don't let silica dust follow you home. If possible, shower and change into clean clothes before leaving the worksite. This will prevent you from bringing silica into other work areas, your car and your home—and exposing your family and other people to silica.



Use respiratory protection where other controls do not provide protection.

- Although silicosis cannot be cured, it can be prevented. The use engineering controls, like using water at the point of generation, to prevent the dust from becoming airborne.
- Practice good hygiene controls, like washing your hands & face before eating, drinking or smoking, to prevent exposure to silica.