

- When you cut, grind, trim, drill, sand or polish stone it can release fine dust containing crystalline silica which can cause serious health effects.
- People working with engineered stone are most at risk because it contains up to 95% crystalline silica.

Control exposure

- Never undertake uncontrolled dry cutting, grinding, trimming, drilling, sanding or polishing.
- Enclose slab cutting, grinding, trimming, sanding or polishing equipment.
- Use wet cutting methods like water jetting and on-tool water suppression.
- Use on-tool extraction with H class vacuum/dust extractor.
- Use powered air purifying respirators (PAPR) with at least P2 filters.
- Routinely clean up any residual dust using wet methods, low-pressure water or H Class vacuum.
- Dispose of slurry before it dries out.
- Check recycled water is filtered properly.
- Carry out air monitoring to check dust controls are working properly.
- Provide annual health monitoring for workers to detect early changes in health.
- Prepare a safe work method statement for onsite installation and provide it to the principal contractor or builder.
- Consult workers when making decisions on the matters above.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland
[worksafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

WorkCover Queensland
[workcoverqld.com.au](https://www.workcoverqld.com.au)

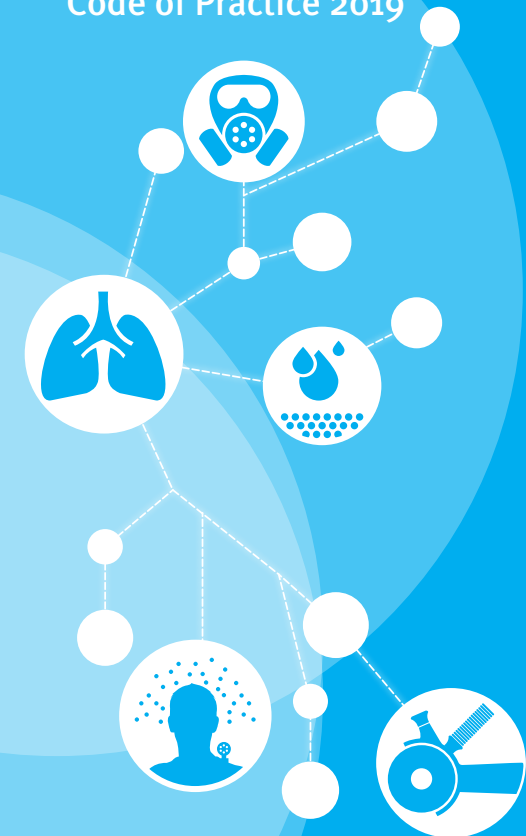
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Managing respirable crystalline silica dust exposure in the stone benchtop industry

Code of Practice 2019



Health risks of exposure to respirable crystalline silica dust

Silicosis is preventable by using proper controls to eliminate or minimise exposure to respirable crystalline silica dust in the workplace.

Respirable crystalline silica dust is so fine you usually can't see it—it can stay airborne for long periods of time and be easily inhaled deep into the lungs. Breathing in respirable crystalline silica dust can cause serious lung diseases including silicosis and lung cancer as well as chronic renal disease and autoimmune disorders.

Workers with early-stage silicosis may not have any symptoms—regular health monitoring is essential to detect the disease early, allowing action to be taken before it progresses.

Control exposure



Control the dust (sections 7 and 8)

Uncontrolled dry cutting, grinding, trimming, drilling, sanding, polishing of engineered or natural stone is prohibited.

At the workshop (section 7)

Dust (wet or dry) must be controlled at the source using one or more of the following:

- water suppression methods and spray/mist guards
- local exhaust ventilation
- on-tool extraction using a H Class vacuum
- fabrication rooms or enclosed equipment.

You should also:

- carry out daily start-up checks to ensure machine and spray/mist guards and local exhaust ventilation are fitted correctly and working effectively
- routinely clean up with H Class vacuum, wet methods or low-pressure water
- dispose of slurry before it dries out.

Onsite installation (section 8)

Cutting, grinding, trimming, drilling, sanding or polishing during installation should be eliminated by:

- accurate measuring and cutting of sink, tap and stove top holes at the workshop
- consulting with principal contractors and clients to prevent alterations on site
- taking the slab back to the workshop for alterations other than minor modifications.

Where onsite trimming or alteration is unavoidable it should be conducted in a controlled exclusion zone:

- using on-tool extraction and/or water suppression and powered air purifying respirators (PAPR) with at least P2 filters
- according to the safe work method statement prepared and given to the principal contractor or builder before work commences
- and cleaned up using H Class vacuum, wet methods or low-pressure water.

Wear the right respirator (section 7.2.4)

The right respirator for the job is essential to protect a worker's health.

- Wear PAPR with at least P2 filters when cutting, grinding, trimming, drilling, sanding or polishing engineered or natural stone and during equipment or workshop cleaning.
- Make sure all respirators with a tight seal undergo annual quantitative fit testing by a competent person.
- Ensure workers are trained how to use (including how to seal check), store and maintain respirators.

Monitor exposure and health



Carry out air monitoring (section 6.2)

Stone benchtop fabrication businesses are required to engage a competent person (i.e. an independent certified occupational hygienist)¹ to undertake air monitoring:

- within six months of the code commencing (for existing businesses) or a new stone benchtop fabrication business starting
- every six months in the first two years to establish a baseline
- at least every 12 months, or sooner in response to specific triggers as outlined in the code.

Air monitoring carried out must be recorded and the records kept for 30 years after the date the record is made.

Provide health monitoring (section 9)

Stone benchtop fabrication businesses must provide health monitoring to workers whose jobs put them at significant risk so that any changes in a worker's health status because of exposure to respirable crystalline silica can be identified.

Health monitoring must be provided:

- before a worker commences
- at least annually
- on exit of employment.

Health monitoring must be done or supervised by a doctor with experience in health monitoring. As an example, any doctor who is a fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine will have the necessary experience. A list of these practitioners can be found on the Royal Australasian College of Physicians² website. Health monitoring records must be kept as a confidential record for at least 30 years after the record is made.

1 www.aioh.org.au/resources/find-an-occupational-hygienist

2 www.racp.edu.au/about/college-structure/australasian-faculty-of-occupational-and-environmental-medicine/find-a-consultant