

What's in the 2025 Silica Permanent Standard

In California, there is an [epidemic of silicosis](#), an incurable and potentially deadly lung disease, among workers in the engineered stone industry. On February 5, 2025, [permanent requirements in the Cal/OSHA silica general industry standard](#) came into effect for workers in the artificial and natural stone industries, and in other non-construction businesses where workers are exposed to silica dust. The [Cal/OSHA construction silica regulations have not changed](#).

The updated regulation adds protections for workers exposed to silica dust in general industry, as shown in the first section below. Workers who perform high-exposure trigger tasks on artificial and natural stone are subject to stricter requirements to control hazardous exposure, which are described starting on page 2.

Silicosis is 100% preventable.

Requirements for all silica dust-generating tasks

- Have a [qualified person](#) perform an exposure assessment by [air monitoring](#) for any task that creates silica dust.
- Notify your employees of the air testing results; you may need to do additional sampling based on your results.
- Provide silicosis screening medical exams for employees who are exposed to silica dust, above the Cal/OSHA **action level** (AL). The exam must be offered within 30 days of starting employment, and then at least every 3 years thereafter.

Cal/OSHA Exposure Limits for Respirable Crystalline Silica Dust

Action level (AL)* = 0.025 mg/m³ Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL)* = 0.05 mg/m³

*for an 8-Hour time-weighted average (TWA) sample

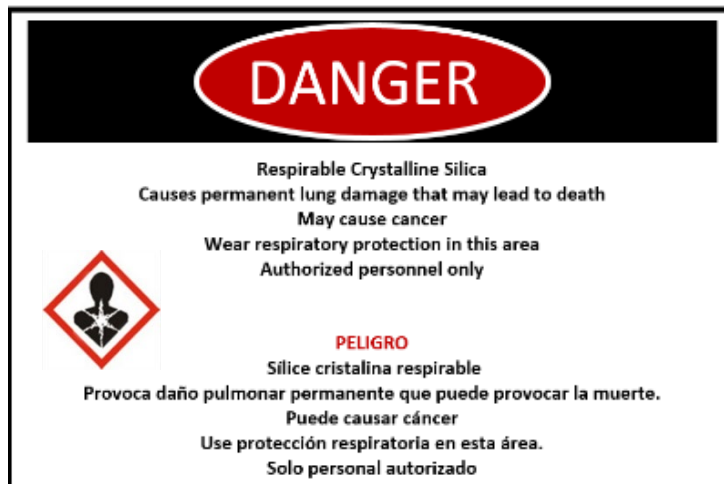
- Use engineering and work practice controls to keep employee exposure to silica dust at or below the Cal/OSHA permissible exposure limits.
- Prohibit dry sweeping/brushing and the use of compressed air for cleaning clothes or surfaces.
- Provide workers with appropriate respiratory protection if feasible controls cannot control exposures below the PEL or trigger tasks require it (see section below).
- Include respirable crystalline silica in your company's [Hazard Communication program](#).
- Train your employees so they understand the silica training topics required by the updated regulation.
- Establish and implement a written Silica Exposure Control Plan.
 - Depending on your operations, you may use one of State Fund's Silica Exposure Control Plan templates:
 - [Exposure Control Plan Template for Respirable Crystalline Silica Artificial and Natural Stone Work](#)
 - [Exposure Control Plan Template for Respirable Crystalline Silica General Industry](#)
 - Review and update your plan annually and make it always available for staff to read.

- Set up regulated areas with limited access, identified by warning signs in areas where employees perform tasks that expose them to silica dust above the Cal/OSHA exposure limit, and whenever employees perform high-exposure trigger tasks (see definition on next page)

What is a high-exposure trigger task?

Tasks that include **machining, crushing, cutting, drilling, abrading, abrasive blasting, grinding, chiseling, carving, gouging, polishing, buffing, fracturing, intentional breaking, or intentional chipping** of **artificial stone** (containing more than 0.1% crystalline silica) and **natural stone** (containing more than 10% crystalline silica).

Also includes cleanup, disturbing, or handling of wastes, dusts, residues, debris, or other materials created during the above listed tasks.



High-exposure trigger task requirements do not apply to:

1. Geological field research with less than 30 days in a 12-month period
2. Quarries, mines, and concrete and cement manufacturing facilities
3. Fired ceramic or porcelain tile/panel manufacturing with no artificial stone products, where exposures are below the action level
4. Fabrication or finishing of natural stone burial monuments or related items where exposures are continuously maintained below the action level

Take these actions to avoid having your business shut down by Cal/OSHA due to imminent silica hazards:

For all businesses with silica exposures:

- Ensure your employees wear respiratory protection as required.
- Set up a compliant [respiratory protection program](#).
- [Report](#) your employees' silica dust exposures to the Cal/OSHA Carcinogen Unit.
- Report if your employees have silicosis or silica-related cancer [to Cal/OSHA](#) and to the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#).

For businesses with high-exposure trigger tasks:

- Use wet methods to suppress silica dust.
- Ensure employees performing high-exposure trigger tasks wear PAPRs.
- Prohibit the use of compressed air and dry sweeping.
- Don't allow employees to walk through silica dust residues.
- Forbid the use of employee rotation to reduce worker exposures.

Additional requirements for high-exposure trigger tasks:

- Provide initial and every 3-year silicosis medical monitoring to all employees performing trigger tasks for 30 or more days per year, *no matter what the silica air monitoring levels are*.

- Require that all employees performing high-exposure trigger tasks wear a NIOSH approved powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) with an Assigned Protection Factor (APF) of 1,000, or a respirator providing equal or greater protection. Certain exceptions apply, see box below.
- Implement *mandatory* practices to effectively suppress silica dust by wet methods, ensuring water covers the entire surface of a work object where a tool contacts it by one of these methods:
 - Apply continuous, appropriate volumes of water directly to work surface.
 - Submerge the work object under water.
 - Water jet cutting.
- Filter any recycled water to remove silica prior to reuse.
- Implement *mandatory* housekeeping and administrative practices to protect workers from silica dust by:
 - Ensuring prompt cleanup of dust and debris and placing the waste material into leak-tight containers/bags.
 - Using only wet methods or high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuums to collect waste.
 - Prohibiting these practices:
 - Use of compressed air for any purpose.
 - Dry sweeping, brushing, shoveling, disturbing, or any other dry clean-up of wastes, dusts, debris, or any material that may contain silica dust.
 - Use of employee rotation to reduce worker exposure to silica dust.
 - Walking or moving equipment on or through any material that may contain silica dust.
 - Ensuring that employees engaged in housekeeping tasks wear PAPRs.
 - Providing readily available washing facilities.
- Ensure your written Silica Exposure Control Plan specifically includes air monitoring results, proof of silica reporting to Cal/OSHA, PPE procedures to prevent home or vehicle silica contamination, and procedures for employee medical exams and training.
- Conduct initial air monitoring and follow-up monitoring using a qualified person at least every 12 months to ensure that silica controls are working properly. You may need to monitor more often if exposures are above the action level.

PAPR Respirator Exceptions: for Trigger Tasks:

- *Exception 1: If silica exposure is always below the action level as shown by air monitoring every 6 months, then loose fitting PAPR, half-face PAPR, or a full-face air-purifying respirator can be used.*
- *Exception 2: Employers can provide respirator with APF of 10 (half-mask, N95) or greater with HEPA, N100, R100, or P100 filter if all the following conditions are met.*
 - *Air monitoring every 6 months shows silica exposure is below AL.*
 - *All employees are in the medical surveillance program, with no employee (current or previously employed) diagnosed with silicosis or suspected silicosis.*
 - *Does not apply if medical professional recommends a more protective respirator.*
- *Any employee diagnosed with actual or suspected silicosis must wear a full-face, tight-fitting supplied-air respirator in pressure-demand mode as recommended by medical professional.*