

N.C. Department of Labor Mine and Quarry Bureau

SILICOSIS

The dust that is generated in and around most quarries, crushing plants, mines, mills and processing plants is hazardous to your health because it contains silica (quartz). Silica is found in 60 percent of the rocks that make up the earth's surface. Certain types of sand are almost pure silica. The hazard exists when this material is released as a dust as a result of drilling, blasting, crushing and grinding.



Breathing this free silica dust, either in large quantities or over a long period of time, may cause a lung disease called silicosis. The small dust particles remain in your lungs and scar tissue forms around them. This scarring, or fibrosis, stiffens the lungs and reduces their ability to exchange oxygen. The result is that you become short of breath, tire easily and may begin to cough. These symptoms will become more severe the longer you work around and breathe the dust. There is no cure for silicosis, and this disease may shorten your life, as well as cause other lung complications.

If your job requires you to work where dust is generated, such as drilling, crushing and milling operations, and the dust is not controlled, your chances of contracting silicosis are great.

The key to preventing silicosis is to control the exposure to free silica.

Ways You Can Protect Yourself From Contracting Silicosis

1. Use the dust controlling devices that are provided at all times (water sprays, detergent kits, water trucks, dust collection or exhaust ventilation).
2. Do not operate dust generating equipment unless the dust control devices are installed and working properly.
3. Keep floors and work areas free of dust or keep the area wetted down. Vacuum instead of sweeping.
4. Avoid areas where dust is present. If you can see the dust, chances are that you are breathing a harmful amount.
5. If you have to clean up areas or make repairs that may generate dust, wear a well-fitting government-approved type respirator (dust mask).



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