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QuickTakes

OSHA

U.S. Department of Labor's OSHA Requests Information on Table 1 of the Silica Standard for Construction

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is requesting information and comment on Table 1 of the agency's Respirable Crystalline Silica Standard for Construction. OSHA seeks information on additional engineering and work practice control methods to effectively limit exposure to silica for the equipment and tasks currently listed on Table 1. The agency is also requesting information about other construction equipment and tasks that generate silica that it should consider adding to Table 1, along with information about their associated engineering and work practice control methods.

In addition, OSHA is seeking comments about whether to revise paragraph (a)(3) of the Respirable Crystalline Silica Standard for General Industry to broaden the circumstances under which general industry and maritime employers would be permitted to comply with Table 1 of the silica standard for construction.

Information submitted will allow OSHA to consider new developments and enhanced control methods for equipment that generates exposures to silica, and provide additional data on exposures to silica from equipment and tasks using a variety of control methods under different workplace conditions.

Expanding Table 1 to include additional engineering and work practice control methods, equipment, and tasks could provide employers with more flexibility and reduce regulatory burdens while maintaining protections for employees.

If information submitted in response to this request indicates that revisions to the silica standards are needed, the agency will then publish the proposed revisions in the Federal Register for public comment.

Comments must be submitted by October 14, 2019. Comments and materials may be submitted electronically at http://www.regulations.gov, the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal, or by facsimile or mail. See the Federal Register notice for submission details.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for American working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education, and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

This is a great opportunity to have your voice heard by OSHA. If your company needs assistance in evaluating tasks not listed on Table 1 or, if you need assistance in submitting a task or data for OSHA's consideration, please let Occupational Safety Consultants know!

Information for this article provided by OSHA, American Lung Association and Work Safe BC. Edited by John B. Struble; Occupational Safety Consultants Inc, www.workriskfree.com

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Monthly Toolbox Talk

What is Silicosis? Silicosis is a condition caused by inhaling too much silica over a long period of time. Silica is a highly-common, crystal-like mineral found in sand, rock, and quartz. Silica can have deadly consequences for people who work with stone, concrete, glass, or other forms of rock.

Silica dust particles act as tiny blades on the lungs. These particles create small cuts that can scar the lung tissue when inhaled through the nose or mouth. Scarred lungs do not open and close as well, making breathing more difficult. Any level of silica exposure can result in silicosis.

There are three types of silicosis:

- **Acute silicosis:** Forms a few weeks or months after high levels of silica exposure. This condition progresses rapidly.
- **Accelerated silicosis:** Comes on a number of years after exposure.
- **Chronic silicosis:** Occurs 10 years or more after silica exposure. Even low exposure levels can cause chronic silicosis.

Symptoms of Silicosis

Symptoms of silicosis can appear from a few weeks to many years after exposure to silica dust. Symptoms typically worsen over time as scarring in the lungs occurs. Cough is an early symptom and develops over time with exposure to silica that is inhaled. In acute silicosis, you may experience fever and sharp chest pain along with breathing difficulty. These symptoms can come on suddenly. In chronic silicosis, you may only have an abnormal chest X-ray in the beginning and then slowly develop a cough and breathing difficulty. More than a third of people with silicosis have phlegm production and cough. Chronic bronchitis-like symptoms may occur, and the lungs have additional sounds called wheezes and crackles. As extensive scarring progresses over time, you may see signs of chronic lung disease such as leg swelling, increased breathing rate, and bluish discoloration of the lips.

How Silicosis is Treated

Silicosis doesn't have one specific medical treatment. The aim of treatment will be to reduce your symptoms. Cough medicine can help with cough symptoms and antibiotics can help treat respiratory infections. Inhalers can be used to open up the airways. Some patients wear oxygen masks to increase the amount of oxygen in their blood. Patients with severe silicosis may require a lung transplant. Silicosis has become less common over time thanks to improved work safety measures. However, silicosis can still occur, and there is no cure for it at present. Your long-term outlook depends on the severity of your condition. Intense lung scarring can develop in both accelerated and chronic silicosis. Scarring destroys healthy lung tissue, reducing the amount of oxygen the lungs can transmit to the blood.

How to Protect Yourself

OSHA has a lot of great information that you and your employer can reference. Occupational Safety Consultants can also be a resource for training and hazard analyses. Where a hazard assessment conducted by the employer determines that a worker may be exposed to silica, the employer shall develop, establish, implement and maintain measures and procedures to control the exposure of the worker to silica. Workers should eat, drink, and smoke away from dust that may contain silica. They should also wash their hands before doing any of these activities to clear their hands of any dust.

Information for this article provided by OSHA, American Lung Association and Work Safe BC. Edited by John B. Struble; Occupational Safety Consultants Inc, www.workriskfree.com