

Silica - FACTSHEET

What is silica?

Silica is a natural substance found in rock, sand and clay, and in products such as bricks, tiles and concrete. When these materials are worked on, respirable silica crystalline (RCS) is released as a fine dust which is hazardous when breathed in.

What can result in exposure to Silica?

Work such as, but not limited to:

- Ballast tamping
- Conventional / automatic track renewal
- Loading / unloading of ballast
- Drilling / cutting silica containing material

Did you know...

Each year in Britain, there is approximately 800 new cases of lung cancer caused by silica.

The workplace exposure limit is shown next to the 1p coin. Breath in more than this daily and you could be at risk of lung disease.

Once RCS is inhaled, it causes scar tissues to develop in the lungs. This increases the risk of developing lung diseases.



What can you do to protect your health?

If it's silica dust, it's not just dust

- Through planning, avoid and or implement robust controls to reduce exposure;
- If you are not required as part of dust generating activity, stand clear in line with implemented exclusion zones;
- Use all respiratory protective equipment (RPE) provided at all times;
- Know how to use your RPE correctly, ensuring you are trained in its usage and have been fit tested;
- Maintain cleanliness of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Be aware dust can gather on clothing and should be professionally laundered;
- **Stop smoking** – this increases your risk of developing respiratory ill health, for support, use the NHS helpline on **0800 022 4332**;
- Take part in health surveillance programmes when required.

