How to identify the hazards that can cause occupational lung diseases in

ENGINEERED STONE WORKERS

IDENTIFY

MANAGE

MONITOR

This checklist will help persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) in the engineered stone industry to identify the hazards that can cause occupational lung diseases, including silicosis, in their workers.

To manage risks of respirable crystalline silica dust, you must first identify whether silica dust is being generated and released into the air at your workplace. Workers may be exposed to silica dust whenever it is airborne and they can breathe it in.

Have you had a look at your workplace to identify potential hazards?

For example, have you checked areas where engineered stone is fabricated or installed, administration areas, changerooms and lunchrooms for any hazards?

Regularly looking at your workplace and how your workers conduct their work will help you to identify when things change, such as there being more silica dust than usual.

Identification is the first step in managing work, health and safety (WHS) risks. If you identify a hazard by using the checklist below, you should do a workplace risk assessment.

Look at your workplace	Yes	No
Can you see coatings of dust on machinery, tools, windows, or work surfaces, including outside the immediate work area? *Looking at how clean your workplace is can help indicate the presence of silica dust in the air.*	☐	☐
Are your workers getting covered in dusts while working? *Exposure to silica dust can cause irritation, allergies and lung diseases such as silicosis. If workers are covered in dusts it could indicate that your work practices are not controlled, and their risk of exposure is higher. If so, it's important to stop work, identify the hazards and re-assess the task applying appropriate control measures.*	☐	☐
Are the tool filter warning lights on?	☐	☐
Do certain work tasks make you or your workers cough or complain of feeling unwell? For example, do they cough when cleaning the workplace? *If workers cough during specific tasks, it might mean that they are breathing in dusts. If so, it's important your workers stop work, identify the hazards and re-assess the task applying appropriate control measures.*	☐	☐
Do you know the levels of silica dust in the air at your workplace? *You might not see silica dust in the air. The workplace exposure standard (WES) for respirable crystalline silica (silica dust) is 0.05 mg/m³ (eight-hour time weighted average). The WES must not be exceeded.* *Even if exposure is below the WES, you should keep your workers' exposure to silica dust as low as you reasonably can.* *Air monitoring can help you assess the risk of your workers being exposed to silica dust. Arrange for it to be carried out by an independent, competent person like an occupational hygienist. They can help determine the difference between safe levels of dusts, gases, fumes or vapours and levels that are harmful to workers.*	☐	☐

safe work australia

CLEAN AIR. CLEAR LUNGS.

Not all workplace hazards are visible.

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Talk and consult with your workers

	Yes	No
Do your workers know the risks of breathing in silica dust? *You need to provide your workers with information and training on how to work safely with engineered stone.*	☐	☐
Do you consult with and listen to their concerns about their work processes and try to change work practices to limit their exposure? *As a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), you have a duty of care to ensure your workers are not exposed to health and safety risks. Listening to your workers can provide valuable information on workplace hazards and risks which you can then manage appropriately.*	☐	☐
Have you completed a risk assessment in consultation with workers and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) to help identify the risks and controls required to eliminate or reduce workplace exposure. *Consultation with workers and HSRs is required at each step of the risk management process. By drawing on their knowledge and experience, you can identify hazards and choose effective control measures.*	☐	☐

Check labels & product information

	Yes	No
Have you checked the product information, labels and relevant safety data sheets and read and understood the health information in it? *Product information, labels, or safety data sheets (if available) provide detailed information on hazardous substances. It is important to read and understand this information when working with engineered stone so that it can be safely stored, handled, or used in the workplace.* *Find out more at:* *https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/suppliers-and-users-workplace-hazardous-chemicals-transition-ghs-7* *https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/topic/labelling-chemicals* *A label or safety data sheet may not always be available at a workplace or with a product that contains silica. If you do not have an information sheet or a safety data sheet for a product, you should talk to your supplier to find out how much silica is present. You should assume engineered stone products contain very high amounts of silica.* Read our Using safety data sheets: identifying the hazards that can cause occupational lung diseases information sheet at swa.gov.au/clearlungs.	☐	☐

Contact your WHS regulator

	Yes	No
Have you looked for guidance on your WHS regulator's website? *Your WHS regulator is responsible for regulating and enforcing WHS laws in their jurisdiction. Contact them if you have any questions specific to your workplace.*	☐	☐

For more information, read our 'How to identify the hazards that can cause occupational lung diseases in engineered stone workers? – information sheet' at swa.gov.au/clearlungs.

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