

How to manage the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in

ENGINEERED STONE WORKERS

PHASE 1

Identify hazards & assess risks



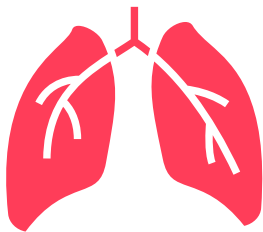
PHASE 2

Manage risks



PHASE 3

Monitor & review



Working with engineered stone? Respirable crystalline silica (silica dust) can cause occupational lung diseases in your workers and must be eliminated or controlled in your workplace.

Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws require you, as the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), to eliminate and minimise risks to the health and safety of your workers as much as you reasonably can.

To manage risks of lung diseases from dust that is created when working with engineered stone, you must first identify when and where workers may be exposed to silica dust. For more information, read our [information sheet How to identify the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in engineered stone workers](#).

How to manage or control the risks

The hierarchy of control measures can be used to manage the risks of exposure to silica dust. When working with engineered stone, the risk of exposure may be so high that a combination of control measures is needed to protect your workers.

The hierarchy of control measures are outlined below:



Elimination

The most effective way to manage a risk is to completely remove the hazard from your workplace. This means eliminating the creation of silica dust. Eliminating silica dust may not be practicable if you can't make the end product without generating it.

In this case, you must minimise the risks of workers' exposure to silica dust as much as you reasonably can.

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MANAGE

How to manage or control the risks (continued):



Substitution

Substitution controls replace a product or chemical with one that's less hazardous. Substitution may not be practicable if it means you can't make the end product.

Examples of substitution when working with engineered stone can include suggesting the use of:

- products that do not contain crystalline silica or have less crystalline silica in them
- a crystalline silica containing product that does not need to be cut, ground or polished.



Isolation

Isolation controls place barriers or distance between a hazard and your workers. Physical barriers that remove the worker from silica dust are the most effective.

Isolation controls include:

- limiting access around work processes that generate silica dust
- isolating fabrication of engineered stone in an enclosed room with restricted access and a suitable ventilation system
- creating physical barriers and exclusion zones around tasks and between workers to prevent workers breathing in silica dust
- having a room or area away from the work area for other tasks such as changing or eating.



Engineering

Engineering controls use physical devices to change the characteristics of a task. The best engineering controls for your workplace will depend on the tasks your workers carry out.

Engineering controls when working with engineered stone include using:

- automation when carrying out modification of an engineered stone slab

- wet cutting methods
- local exhaust ventilation
- on-tool dust extraction
- industrial vacuum cleaners with appropriate dust filtration during clean-up.



Administrative

Administrative controls provide additional protection after you have implemented substitution, isolation and engineering controls. Administrative controls may include:

- shift rotation policies to minimise the time workers spend in an exposure area
- providing a service to launder contaminated work clothes at work
- designated change areas for changing out of personal protective equipment and contaminated work clothes
- policies for storing, cleaning and maintaining equipment
- signs to alert workers of silica dust
- policies and procedures for keeping work areas clean, such as using low pressure water, wet sweeping or a M or H class rated vacuum cleaner.

You need to have administrative policies in place and training for your workers to help them understand and manage the risks from silica dust. This includes having policies and training for workers such as administrative workers who may still be at risk even if they don't work directly with engineered stone.

You also need to supervise your workers to make sure they understand and follow your administrative policies.

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MANAGE

How to manage or control the risks (continued):



Personal protective equipment

You should never rely solely on personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimise a risk. PPE should only be used to supplement higher-level control measures. You must make sure PPE, including respiratory protective equipment (RPE):

- is suitable for the task and to protect against the risk
- cartridges and filters have been checked and replaced if necessary
- fits the worker who will be wearing it
- is clean and in good working order.

You also need to provide training on using and maintaining PPE and RPE and make sure workers are using it correctly. RPE should be fit tested by a competent person such as a certified occupational hygienist. You can search for occupational hygienists near you on the [Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists' website \(aioh.org.au\)](http://aioh.org.au).



Talk with your work health and safety regulator

Your **WHS regulator** is here to help. You can talk with them if you have questions or need guidance. They can provide you with information and advice to help you manage the risks at your workplace.

Download and use the 'How to manage the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in engineered stone workers - checklist' to help you further.