

# Hazard Alert for Workers:



Silica dust from countertop work can harm you!

**Do you make countertops using quartz or engineered stone?**

Engineered stone, also called quartz, is a dangerous kind of countertop stone to work with.

Cutting, grinding, and polishing quartz puts silica dust into the air. Silica dust is unsafe to breathe.

**How does the dust harm you?**

When silica dust gets into your lungs, it damages them. This can cause a disease called silicosis. There is no cure for silicosis. Silicosis makes it hard to breathe, which gets worse over time and can lead to death. Silica dust can also cause lung cancer and other health problems.



## **Worker Deaths in California**

Since 2019, we have learned of at least **13 workers** in California who died from silicosis. They worked polishing, cutting, and grinding quartz countertops, and most were in their 30s and 40s when they died.

**What should I do if I think I have breathing problems from dust at my job?**

Ask your employer for the Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for the stone you work on. See a doctor if you are coughing or have trouble breathing. Bring the SDSs and this Hazard Alert with you. The doctor can test you to see what is causing your breathing problems and tell you about treatments to help you breathe.



## How your workplace must keep you safe:



- Always use water.
- Use wet mops, dust-capturing machines and special vacuums (HEPA) to clean dust.
- Wear a PAPR while working.
- Never sweep or use compressed air to clean dust.

Cal/OSHA makes and enforces health and safety rules for workplaces in California. These rules say your employer must train you about silica, how it can harm your health, and how to work safely.

Your employer **MUST** also:

- Always use **water** to **lower dust** levels.
- Measure how much silica dust is in the air.
- Send you to the doctor to check for silicosis.
- Give you a powered air-purifying **respirator (PAPR)** and train you how to use it.

You may be allowed to wear a hooded PAPR if it has the same protection as the tight-fitting type.



If it is a tight-fitting type of PAPR, it must be tested on your face to make sure it fits correctly.

## Resources:

- The CDPH Occupational Health Branch has more information on [Silica Safety Resources](#).
- More information about the [Cal/OSHA Silica Standard](#).
- More information about the [Cal/OSHA Hazard Communication](#) (right to know) standard.
- For more information, contact the CDPH Occupational Health Branch at [occhealth@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:occhealth@cdph.ca.gov) or call (800)970-6680.
- To obtain a copy of this document in an alternate format, please contact (510) 620-5757. Allow at least 10 working days to coordinate alternate format services. CA Relay Service: 711.

For more information, check out our [Silica Safety resources Webpage](#).

