

QY2

COSHH essentials in quarries: Silica



This information will help employers (including the self-employed) comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) and protect workers' health.

It is useful for trade union safety representatives and helps with the Quarries Regulations 1999.

This sheet describes good practice using engineering control - a filtered air supply to the vehicle cab.

It covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

This sheet does not apply to underground working.

Main points

- High dust levels result from transferring minerals to the vehicle, and haulage on unmade roads in dry weather.
- Breathing in dust may cause silicosis.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet. Make sure the controls work.
- You need air sampling. See sheet G409.
- Health surveillance is usually needed. See sheet G404.

Excavating and haulage

Control approach 2 Engineering control

Hazard

- ✓ Quarry work can produce airborne respirable crystalline silica (RCS).
- ✓ All RCS is hazardous, causing silicosis. This is a serious lung disease causing permanent disability and early death.
- ✓ Silicosis is made worse by smoking.
- ✓ 'Respirable' means that the dust can get to the deepest parts of the lung. Such fine dust is invisible under normal lighting.
- ✓ When all controls are applied properly, less than 0.1 mg/m³ RCS is usually achievable (based on an 8-hour time-weighted average).

Crystalline silica concentrations in common materials

- ✓ See table in sheet QY0.

Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow access to authorised staff.

Equipment

- ✓ Design equipment to resist the abrasive effects of silica-containing materials.
- ✓ Can you time mineral extraction for the wetter seasons?
- ✓ Segregate the operator in a ventilated control cab. See sheet QY11. Provide HEPA filtered air to the control cab.
- ✓ Fit a manometer or pressure gauge to show that the clean air supply is working properly.
- ✓ Mark the acceptable range of readings.
- ✓ In dry weather, fit rippers with a mist boom mounted on the ripper/shank mechanism.
- ✓ Keep roadways damp to help suppress dust.
- ✓ Wash down metalled roadways regularly and limit vehicle speed.

Procedures

- ✓ Always confirm that the control cab air supply is turned on and working before starting work.
- ✓ Keep doors and windows closed while working.

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Minerals and silica-containing dusts are very abrasive. Plan regular maintenance.
- ✓ Use a written system of work - define what personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed for maintenance.
- ✓ Follow instructions in maintenance manuals - keep equipment in effective and efficient working order.
- ✓ For control cabins and cabs, see sheet QY11
- ✓ Daily, look for signs of damage. Make repairs.
- ✓ Check any air conditioning self-test every time the machine is started.
- ✓ Change inlet air HEPA filters after 250 hours' use, or as advised by the manufacturer.
- ✓ You need to know the manufacturer's performance specifications to know if the equipment is working properly.
- ✓ If this information isn't available, hire a competent ventilation engineer to determine the performance needed for effective control.
- ✓ The engineer's report must show the target ventilation rates.
- ✓ Keep this information in your testing log-book.
- ✓ Get a competent engineer to examine the system thoroughly and test its performance regularly.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.
- ✓ Review records - failure patterns show where preventive maintenance is needed.
- ✓ Carry out air sampling to check that the controls are working well. See sheet G409.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Ask your supplier to help you select the right PPE.
- ✓ Provide storage for clean and contaminated PPE.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ RPE should not be needed if the controls work properly.
- ✓ RPE is often needed for work near the equipment while running, and for maintenance and cleaning jobs.
- ✓ Powered or air-fed RPE is more comfortable to wear.
- ✓ Select RPE that suits the wearer, the job and the work environment.
- ✓ Decide the level of protection from air sampling data. Otherwise, use RPE with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 40. See sheets R4 and R5.
- ✓ Make sure all RPE is properly fit-tested - get advice from your supplier.
- ✓ Make sure that workers check their RPE works properly before use.
- ✓ Replace RPE filters as recommended by the supplier.
- ✓ Keep RPE clean.

Other protective equipment

- ✓ Provide clean, dust-resistant coveralls.

Caution: Never allow use of compressed air for removing dust from clothing.



Health surveillance

- ✓ You need health surveillance unless exposure to RCS is well below the limit. See sheet G404.
- ✓ Consult an occupational health professional - see 'Useful links'.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ See sheet QY11 for cabins and cabs.
- ✓ Clean the control cabin at least once a week. Fine dust on internal surfaces suggests poor control.
- ✓ Use a Type H vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter, or wet clean.
Caution: Don't use a brush or compressed air.

Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell workers that silica dust can cause serious lung diseases.
- ✓ Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet QY0.

Further information

- *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* HSG53 (Third edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 0 7176 2904 X
- *Control of respirable crystalline silica in quarries* HSG73 HSE Books 1992 ISBN 0 11 885680 4
- For environmental guidelines see sheet QY0

Useful links

- Your Trade Association may advise on health and safety consultants and training providers. For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.
- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at www.bohs.org for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see www.nhsplus.nhs.uk.

This document is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/ and www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/

This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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Employee checklist

- Are you sure how to use all dust controls?
- Is the cab clean air supply working? Are the windows shut?
- Check that the filter seating is in good condition.
- Keep the cab interior clean.
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage every day.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor. Don't just carry on working.
- Make suggestions to improve the effectiveness of dust control.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.
- Use, maintain and store your protective equipment in accordance with instructions.