

# Hazard Alert for Workers

Silica dust from countertop work can harm you!



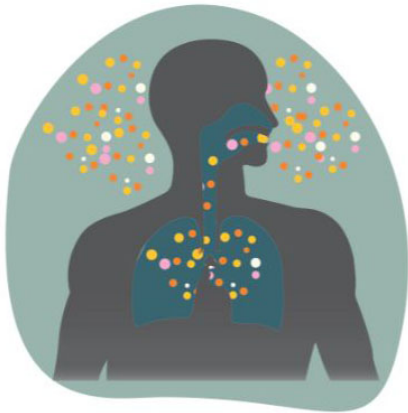
**Do you make countertops using engineered stone?**

Engineered stone, also called artificial stone or 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 **22 workers** in California who died from silicosis. They worked polishing, cutting and grinding quartz countertops. 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:

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.

### You **must**:

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

### 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 **PAPR** and train you how to use it.



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



You may be allowed to wear a **hooded PAPR**, or other type of respirator, if it has the same protection as the tight-fitting type.



## Resources

For more information, scan the QR code to visit **Silicosis**.



More information about the:

[Cal/OSHA Silica Standard](#)



[Cal/OSHA Hazard Communication \(right to know\) standard](#)



**Contact the Occupational Health Branch at:**  
[occhealth@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:occhealth@cdph.ca.gov) | (800) 970-6680

