

# Pinnacol Pointers for Safety Group Programs

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**PINNACOL**  
ASSURANCE

*Editor's Note: Safety Group Program Monthly Newsletter Article – May 2017*  
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## **Managing Crystalline Silica Risk at Your Workplace**

If your employees work with sand, stone, concrete, glass, or other forms of rock that produce dust, your organization should take steps to evaluate and manage the risks of crystalline silica. Respirable crystalline silica can cause silicosis, a progressive, disabling and sometimes fatal lung disease. Workers in sandblasting; sand-casting foundry operations; mining; tunneling; cement/concrete cutting and demolition; masonry production and cutting; and granite cutting, grinding and polishing are at greatest risk for silicosis.

Pinnacol Assurance's on-staff industrial hygienists can help evaluate on-the-job exposure to this and other airborne contaminants, and recommend steps to reduce the risks.

## **OSHA's Final Rule to Protect Workers From Exposure**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) last year issued a final rule to protect America's workers by limiting their exposure to respirable crystalline silica. The rule comprises of two standards, one for construction and one for general industry and maritime. OSHA estimates that the rule will save over 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis each year.

### *Key Provisions*

- Reduces the permissible exposure limit for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an eight-hour shift.
- Requires employers to use engineering and work practice controls to reduce worker exposure to silica dust (e.g., water to wet down the dust or vacuums and ventilation systems to capture and remove dust), provide respirators when engineering and work practice controls cannot adequately limit exposure, limit worker access to high exposure areas, provide training, develop a written exposure control plan, measure exposures, and offer medical exams to highly exposed workers.

### *Compliance Schedule*

Both standards contained in the final rule took effect on June 23, 2016. Industries have one to five years to comply with most requirements, based on the following schedule:

- Construction - June 23, 2017, one year after the effective date. However, on April 6, 2017, OSHA postponed the compliance deadline to Sept. 23, 2017, to conduct additional outreach and provide educational materials and guidance for employers.
- General industry and maritime - June 23, 2018, two years after the effective date.
- Hydraulic fracturing - June 23, 2018, two years after the effective date for all provisions except engineering controls, which have a compliance date of June 23, 2021.

## **Controlling Silica Exposure in Your Workplace**

Here are suggestions for controlling crystalline silica exposure at your workplace:

- Use materials that don't contain crystalline silica.
- Use engineering controls, such as blasting cabinets and local exhaust ventilation.

- Work wet, using wet sprays and wet methods for cutting, chipping, drilling, sawing and grinding.
- Use personal protective equipment, such as respirators, when necessary.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke near crystalline silica dust.
- Wash hands and face before eating, drinking or smoking following exposure.

### **Pinnacol Resources**

For more information on shoring up safeguards against the hazards of crystalline silica at your organization, visit the [Safety resources](#) web page at Pinnacol.com. Or call Pinnacol's Safety On Call hotline at 303.361.4700 or 888.501.4752. Our safety services team stands ready to answer questions and help keep your workforce safe, healthy and on the job.

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