MANAGING CRYSTALLINE SILICA SUBSTANCES

New model WHS Regulations for the processing of crystalline silica substances

On 1 September 2024, an amendment to the model Work Health and Safety Regulations will take effect. The amendments detail additional requirements for the processing of crystalline silica substances and aim to protect workers and others at the workplace from exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS).

What is a crystalline silica substance?

A crystalline silica substance (or CSS) is a material that contains at least 1% crystalline silica. Crystalline silica is a major component of most rocks, soils, sand and clay. Common examples of such materials include concrete and cement -based products bricks, pavers, tiles, grouts, natural and engineered stones and asphalt.

When a CSS is processed, RCS is generated and has potential to cause harm when breathed in.

.

Processing of crystalline silica substances

Typical CSS processing activities include:

- The use of power tools or mechanical plant to carry out an activity involving the crushing, cutting, grinding, trimming, sanding, abrasive polishing of a CSS; or
- The use of roadheaders to excavate material that is a CSS; or
- The quarrying of a material that is a CSS; or
- Mechanical screening involving a material that is a CSS;
- Tunnelling through a material that is a CSS; or
- A process that exposes, or is reasonably likely to expose a person to RCS during the manufacture or handling of a CSS.

If you or your sub-contractors undertake any of these processes, then each task will need to be risk assessed, and a silica risk control plan will need to be developed and implemented.

Silica risk control plan

A silica risk control plan is required for the processing of CSS. The plan must:

- Identify, and risk assess CSS processes; and
- Document what control measures will be used using the hierarchy of controls, and provide details on how they will be implemented, monitored and reviewed; and
- Be easy to understand and readily accessible to the user.

Monitoring of CSS processes

Personal exposure monitoring for RCS must be conducted for CSS processes that are high risk. To obtain statistically valid data, an exposure monitoring program should be developed and implemented by a Certified Occupational Hygienist (COH®). The monitoring should be undertaken by qualified Occupational Hygienists over time and will require multiple days of sampling.

Health monitoring for RCS must also be provided for workers who undertake high risk CSS processes, including those regularly in the vicinity of the work.

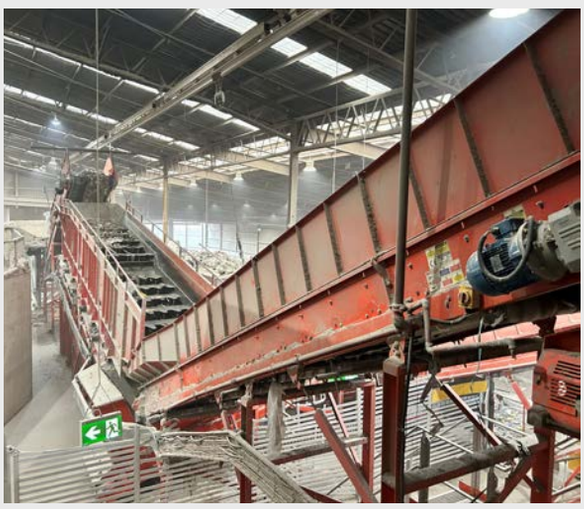
Property Risk Australia's team of occupational hygienists can assist you with the development and implementation of your risk assessments, silica risk control plans and exposure monitoring programs.

Please contact our COH® for more information.
0459 886 869
matthew.mckay@propertyrisk.com.au
www.propertyrisk.com.au

PROPERTY RISK AUSTRALIA

Key Points

- CSS is a material that contains at least 1% crystalline silica (check SDS or have it analysed for crystalline silica content)
- CSS Process = use of power tools or mechanical plant, use of road headers to excavate, quarrying, Mechanical screening, Tunnelling or a process that exposes, or is reasonably likely to expose a person to RCS during the manufacture or handling of CSS.



Property Risk Australia can help with the following:

- Undertaking risk assessments (WHS Regulation 529CA).
- The development and implementation of a silica risk control plan (WHS Regulation 529CB)
- Air monitoring – personal, area and control (WHS Regulation 49, 50, 368 and 529CE).
- Preparation of respiratory protection programs (WHS Regulation 44, 45 and 46. AS/NZS 1715:2009 and AS/NZS 1715:2012).
- Respirator fit testing (WHS Regulation 44, 45 and 46. AS/NZS 1715:2012).
- Reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of controls (WHS Regulation 38 and 529CB)

More resources

- Accredited silica awareness training (WHS Regulation 29 and Regulation 529CD).
  https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/10830NAT
- Health monitoring for workers (WHS Regulation 368).
  https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/health-monitoring-crystalline-silica
- Report all results above the Workplace Exposure Standard 0.05mg/m3 to theregulator. WHS Regulation 529CE

NSW - https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/notify-safework/incident-notification
ACT - https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1807314/Notifiable-Incident-Report-Form-Word.pdf
NT - https://www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/safety/report-an-incident-or-injury/what-to-do
https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/notify-nt-worksafe
QLD - https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/safety-and-prevention/incidents-and-notifications/notify-us-of-an-incident
TAS - https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/Health-and-Safety/notify-worksafe
VIC - https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/report-incident
WA - https://www.workcover.wa.gov.au/employers/understanding-your-rights-obligations/reporting-accidents-precribed-diseases/