

Health and Safety Executive supports workers' health at Great Britain's construction sites

Construction sites across Great Britain are to be targeted as part of a month-long respiratory health initiative by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), it has been announced today.

Throughout June, inspections supported by HSE's *Dust Kills* campaign will focus on respiratory risks and occupational lung disease.

Each year in the construction industry, there are thousands of preventable cases of ill health caused by lung disease due to past exposure to dust at work. These diseases often have a life-changing impact and can result in an early death.

Starting on Monday 6 June 2022, site inspections will have a specific focus on dust control, checking employers and workers know the risks, plan their work and are using the right controls.

HSE has partnered with construction and occupational health organisations to highlight the control measures required on site to prevent exposure to dust. The network of *Dust Kills* partners includes British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS), **Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC)** and Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA), Construction Leadership Council (CLC), Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) and Construction Dust Partnership.

HSE's chief inspector of construction, Sarah Jardine, said: "Occupational lung disease is preventable. It can have a devastating impact on both the individuals affected and their family. Every year, construction workers are dying from diseases caused or made worse by their work. We are urging employers and workers to take the necessary precautions today to protect their long-term lung health."

As part of HSE's longer term health and work strategy to improve health within the construction industry, inspectors will be checking the control measures in place to protect workers from inhaling construction dust including Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) and wood dust.

The primary aim of the inspection initiative is to ensure workers' health is being protected. However, if safety risks or other areas of concern are identified, inspectors will take the necessary action to deal with them.

Sarah Jardine continued: "Through our inspection initiatives, inspectors can visit a range of construction sites to check the action businesses are taking to ensure their workers' health is being protected. Through speaking to dutyholders we can make sure they have considered the job from start to

finish and are effectively managing the risks.

“We want everyone, workers and their employers, to be aware of the risks associated with any task that produces dust and use effective control measures, such as water suppression, extraction and masks, to prevent exposure to dust to ensure they are protected from harm and ill health.”

The initiative will be supported by HSE’s *Dust Kills* campaign, aimed at influencing employer behaviour by encouraging builders to download free guidance and advice. There is also information to support workers, helping them to understand the risks and how to stay healthy.

For more information on the programme of inspections visit the Work Right campaign

website <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/construction-dust/>

Follow the campaign on [Twitter at @H_S_E](#), on [Facebook @hsegovuk](#), or on [LinkedIn](#).

To sign up for HSE’s construction e-bulletin go to: hse.gov.uk/construction/infonet.htm

Comments from supporters of the Dust Kills campaign

British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS)

Tina Conroy, Chartered Occupational Hygienist, Lead of BOHS’s Breathe Freely in Construction campaign said “Exposure to a range of hazardous dusts in the construction industry can be fatal, or at least life-changing, affecting not only those who develop diseases resulting from their work, but also their friends and family. Our aim is to ensure that every construction worker can return to their families reassured that they won’t develop life-changing, and often fatal, lung disease.

“This month, as the HSE’s inspectors visit businesses across the country, BOHS is urging employers and employees across the construction industry to become more aware about how dusts can harm the lungs of worker and how simple, low-cost control measures can be taken to control exposures to dust. Information outlining best practice in preventing occupational lung disease is available for free from the BOHS’s [Breathe Freely](#) website and the HSE’s [Workright](#) website.”

Peter Crosland, National Civil Engineering Director, CECA said “Construction workers still die every week from respiratory related illnesses brought on by their work and this is clearly not acceptable in the 21st century. The reasons behind these fatalities are, I believe, quite complex as no one intentionally sets out to cause harm to either themselves or others but nevertheless these illnesses are still occurring.

“Some of the possible reasons include lack of awareness of the legal duties of employers, lack of awareness of the damage dust can actually cause and lack of time on projects to plan work properly, and that’s both at the design stage and on site. Working together with HSE and other stakeholders, we hope

to provide valuable advice to those that need it most.”

Dylan Roberts, Director Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Skanska UK and co-lead of the Construction Leadership Council’s Health, Safety & Wellbeing workstream said “Ensuring everyone goes home healthy everyday is a challenge but one which cannot be compromised. I believe that education is key to safeguarding health. Raising awareness and understanding that dust kills is fundamental to preventing harm.”

Mary Cameron, Construction Dust Partnership said “The construction dust partnership is an industry collaboration with an aim to raise awareness within the construction industry about lung diseases related to hazardous workplace dust and to promote good control practice to prevent these diseases. Construction Dust Partnership is a firm supporter of HSE’s *Dust Kills* campaign. We share strongly in the motives of this campaign which is to raise awareness amongst construction workers about the risks to their respiratory ill health from potential exposures to hazardous dusts.

“By working as a team, we bring a sense of unity to this. We stand together and fight together for the same purpose. And when the purpose is something as crucially important as protecting the health of construction workers, then we need to get involved. As health and safety professionals, occupational hygienist, managers who oversee the health and safety of their workers, we all have not just a need but a duty to join in on campaigns aimed to protect worker’s health.”

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>