

HSE launches inspection initiative targeting manufacturing sector

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors have begun a targeted inspection initiative focusing on manufacturing businesses where materials that contain silica are used.

The inspections, which started on Monday (October 3), will check whether employers and workers know the risks involved when dealing with silica and ensure that businesses have control measures in place to protect workers' respiratory health. This will include brick and tile manufacturers, foundries, stone working sites and manufacturers of kitchen worktops.

Prolonged exposure to airborne particles of respirable crystalline silica (RCS) can lead to life-changing respiratory conditions such as silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer warns Britain's workplace regulator.

As part of the HSE's role as an enabling regulator it has recently refreshed its silica guidance for [brick and tile manufacturing](#), [stonework](#) and [foundries](#) and has an [ebulletin to support this industry](#). HSE also has advice for [employers and workers in manufacturing that use materials that contain silica](#).

Silica is a natural substance found in most stone, rocks, sand, quartz and clay. Silica particles are produced during many manufacturing tasks involving these materials. Silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer can all be caused by breathing in tiny particles of silica. Over time, exposure to silica particles can harm a worker's ability to breathe and cause irreversible, often fatal, lung disease.

Employers have a legal duty to put in place suitable arrangements to manage health and safety and ensure they comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH). Inspectors will be looking for evidence that businesses have put in place effective measures, such as Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV), water suppression and where appropriate, use of protective equipment such as Respiratory Protective (RPE), to reduce workers exposure to the RCS. If any health and safety breaches are discovered, HSE will take enforcement action to make sure workers' health is protected.

HSE's Chief Medical Advisor, Professor David Fishwick explains more about silicosis in this [short video](#).

HSE's head of manufacturing David Butter said: *"It's hugely important for manufacturing businesses where workers use materials that contain silica to act now to ensure they comply with the law and protect their workers from the risks of devastating lung disease. Businesses should take note that that good ventilation in the workplace and protective equipment are just some of the measures they need in place to protect the respiratory health of workers."*

“Ahead of our autumn/winter inspection campaign, we want employers and workers to make sure they are aware of the risks associated with the activities they do. For example brick and tile manufacture, foundry workers and stoneworkers where they cut and shape bricks, tiles and stone that can create RCS dust that could be breathed in. To assist them we have refreshed our guidance. In addition, we have committed to providing dutyholders with regular updates, information and advice through our ebulletin.”

To view the refreshed guidance visit:

- [Brick and tile silica – COSHH e-tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Foundry – COSHH e-tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Stoneworkers – COSHH e-tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

You can sign up for [regular updates on the silica campaign here](#). Follow the campaign on Twitter at @H_S_E or on Facebook @hsegovuk.

Ends

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](#)
1. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
1. The inspection programme will be supported by HSE’s ‘Work-Right’ campaign, aimed to influence employer behaviour change.