

New simplified advice for installers of stone worktops

Britain's workplace safety regulator has published a helpful guide of do's and don'ts for people installing stone worktops.

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) guidance is designed to remind dutyholders and workers about the need to ensure that suitable procedures and controls are in place to help protect against exposure to stone dust and prevent workers breathing in respirable crystalline silica (RCS).

Stone workers are at risk of exposure to airborne particles of stone dust containing RCS when processing stone, including engineered stone, by cutting, chiselling and polishing. Over time, breathing in these silica particles can cause irreversible, life-changing and often fatal respiratory conditions such as silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer.

HSE's guidance covers: Competent staff & effective processes, Pre-Installation, On-site Installation, and Post-installation.

Here are just some of the important steps that can be taken to minimise the risk of exposure:

- Installers should understand the risk from processing stone and how to use suitable controls;
- Worktops should be pre-fabricated so further processing on site is avoided;
- Water suppression or on-tool extraction with shroud and dust collector attached to an M-class vacuum should be used to control any dust generated;
- Respiratory protective equipment with an assigned protection factor (APF) of at least 20 (e.g. FFP3 face mask) should be worn when processing the stone
- Cleaning should be by wet methods or dust class M vacuum to prevent creation of dust

A link to the guidance is available here – [Silica in Stoneworking – Work Right to keep Britain safe](#).

Mike Calcutt, Deputy Director at Health and Work, said: "HSE will continue to work with industry stakeholders to raise awareness of managing the risks from exposure to respirable crystalline silica. It's important that businesses act now to ensure they comply with the law and protect their workers from serious lung diseases.

"Great Britain has a robust and well-established regulatory framework in place to protect workers from the health risks associated with exposure to hazardous substances. We want employers and workers to make sure they are aware of the risks associated with the activities they do, and that's why we

are sending this reminder.

“HSE’s inspectors have often found poor management of control measures including water suppression, dust extraction, equipment maintenance, cleaning and RPE provision. Employers should ensure suitable control measures are properly used and maintained.”

Employers have a legal duty to create suitable arrangements to manage health and safety and ensure they comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended). Businesses should have in place effective control measures, including combinations of the enclosure and automation of processing equipment, use of water suppression and control of any mist generated and personal protective equipment such as RPE, to reduce workers’ exposure to the RCS.

You can sign up for regular updates from HSE on [silica here](#).

Further Information:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More guidance on stone processing is available in the following HSE guides:
3. [ST0: Advice for Managers](#)
4. [INDG463: Control of exposure to silica dust – A guide for employees](#)
5. [HSG201](#): Controlling exposure to stone dust
6. Further details on the latest HSE news releases is available.