

## What's silica dust, and what's the danger?



Silica is found in materials like stone, rock and sand; and products like bricks, tiles, asphalt, concrete and some plastic materials.

Composite or engineered stone used to make kitchen and bathroom benchtops contain silica, sometimes up to 95%. When these materials are cut or worked on, silica is released as a fine dust.



### Get detailed guidance

For more detailed information about how to work safely with silica and reduce you or your worker's exposure to this deadly dust, go to:

- Our website: [worksafe.tas.gov.au/silicasafe](https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/silicasafe)
- Safe Work Australia: [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/silica](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/silica)
- Breathe Freely Australia: [www.breathefreelyaustralia.org.au/stone](https://www.breathefreelyaustralia.org.au/stone)

**1300 366 322**  
[www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)

For more information contact

Phone: 1300 366 322 (within Tasmania)

(03) 6166 4600 (outside Tasmania)

Fax: (03) 6173 0206

Email: [wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au)



**BEWARE!**

**OF WORKPLACE  
DUST  
EXPOSURE**





## Breathing in silica dust can cause:

- **silicosis:**  
a scarring of the lung which can result in a severe shortness of breath. Severe cases can result in complications that lead to death. Silicosis is fast-acting and not reversible — but it is preventable
- lung cancer
- kidney disease
- rheumatoid arthritis.



## What occupations are most at risk?

Silicosis is occurring in industries where workers cut, grind, sand and polish stone or engineered stone to make kitchen, bathroom and commercial benchtops and other products.

Other tasks putting workers at risk include sandblasting, and cutting bricks and tiles. Those working in demolition, construction and mining are also at risk.

Home renovators can also be at risk of inhaling silica dust.

## How to work safely with silica

If you're an employer/person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), you must manage the risks to your workers' health and safety to reduce their exposure to silica dust:

- where possible, cutting, grinding, sanding and polishing should be done wet
- ventilation and filtration systems should be used to collect silica dust at its source
- personal protective equipment should be used as a last resort. Face masks alone are not sufficient to protect workers
- You should also conduct regular air monitoring and health monitoring of your workers.

If you're a worker who could be exposed to silica dust through your work, you must:

- follow your employer's safe work procedures and instructions
- wear any personal protective equipment you're instructed to
- take part in any health monitoring.

