



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW SILICA REGULATION IN QUEBEC

WHAT IS SILICA?

Silica, or crystalline silica, is a mineral that is found in many construction materials such as sand, cement, gravel, stone, brick and mortar. Over exposure to silica can cause coughing, breathing difficulties, wheezing, eye irritation, lung cancer, or silicosis. In order to avoid these, employers have a duty to train employees on tasks that may expose them to these hazards. These tasks may include cutting bricks with a handheld power saw, cutting concrete blocks with a stationary masonry saw, or grinding mortar.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN USES FOR CRYSTALLINE SILICA?

Crystalline silica can be used as a raw material in industrial processes such as glassmaking. It is also found in the form of airborne dust in a wide range of activities: aggregate and industrial mineral extraction, stone cutting, dental prosthesis manufacture, foundries, glassworks, crystal factories, jewelry, ceramics and porcelain industries, brick and tile industries, construction and public works, repair and demolition of industrial furnaces.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE REGULATION?

3.25.4. Control measures for exposure to crystalline silica: When work involving a material presumed to contain or containing crystalline silica is likely to emit dust, the employer must implement at least one of the following control measures:

- a) the use of an exhaust ventilation system equipped with a high-efficiency filter;
- b) the use of a process to humidify dust emissions;
- c) isolation of workers from the source of dust emissions;
- d) containment of the dust source so as not to expose workers to it workers.

Equipment used for dust control purposes must be operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions or a standard offering equivalent safety.

3.25.6. Respiratory protection: Respiratory protection is changed from an N-95 mask to a half-mask with a P-100 filter.

From RSST:

107: Local ventilation: Any point source of emission of gases, fumes, vapours, dusts or mists at a fixed workstation must be provided with a local exhaust ventilation system designed to capture these gases, fumes, vapours, dusts and mists at source.

Article 41: 2° control of processes such as dust abatement, as well as the installation or improvement of local ventilation and, subsequently, the general ventilation of the establishment. (use of water for work and extraction at source).

Specific requirements also apply to abrasive blasting operations:

68: Abrasive blasting: All industrial abrasive blasting operations inside an establishment must be carried out in an isolated room or cabinet with exhaust ventilation.

69: Other protective equipment: In addition to the requirements of article 68, the employer must ensure that any worker exposed to abrasive blast cleaning dust wears an air-supplied blasting hood complying with section VI, gloves, leggings and clothing designed to protect against abrasive and metal dusts and splashes. This equipment must be made available to workers by the employer.

The worker must put on, remove and store the protective equipment described in the first paragraph, outside the area where abrasive blast cleaning operations take place.

TO SUMMARIZE:

Activities targeted on a construction site are sawing, jackhammer breaking, confined space drilling, grinding, sanding, bush hammering and drilling.

Main changes :

- Change in respiratory protection: use of a half-mask with a P-100 filter. Respiratory protection program mandatory.
- Change of procedure: use of equipment with aspiration at source, or abatement of dust with water, or work in a negative-pressure enclosure for all work likely to emit silica into the air.
- Training workers who may be exposed
- Ensuring proper operation of dust control equipment

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