

Silica Rule being Held Up

Construction workers are all too familiar with a dangerous work environment. Jobsites have a lot of different types of workers performing tasks in several places at the same time. It would be impossible to be able to watch everything that is happening, so workers have to trust that others are using proper safety techniques and will be focused on eliminating construction accidents.

When construction workers will be coming into contact with dangerous materials, there will be additional state and federal regulations that will need to be followed as well. Workers depend upon these rules to help prevent injuries and illnesses. New rules are often proposed and debated to determine the effect on both workers and the industry.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is considering a rule concerning the amount of contact that is appropriate for workers exposed to crystalline silica. This material is found in many materials that one would typically find at a construction jobsite, including sand and granite.

Silica is problematic because if it is inhaled over a period of years, serious health issues may result, including lung cancer. According to the Department of Labor (DOL), the most recent numbers on silicosis (from 2005) show that there were 161 deaths attributed to the disease in some fashion. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that over 1.7 million workers in the U.S. come into contact with silica each year.

The exact rule has not yet been proposed, because there is some uncertainty what would happen to the construction industry if exposure to silica was regulated. This could cause project costs to skyrocket.

However, despite the potential cost to the industry, safety

advocates believe that such a rule is necessary, and are very concerned with the unusual delay. Once the rule has been announced, expect there to be further debate over its impact to workers and businesses.

Source: Huffington Post, "[Silica Rule Sits At White House, Endangering Lives, Worker Safety Advocates Say](#)," Dave Jamieson, Jan. 25, 2012