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## **OSHA DELAYS ENFORCEMENT OF CRYSTALLINE SILICA STANDARD IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

On April 6, 2017, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced a delay in enforcement of the [crystalline silica standard](#) for construction from June 23, 2017 to September 23, 2017. Although OSHA enforcement of the standard is delayed, the notice does not alter the compliance date of June 23, 2017. OSHA will not take enforcement action against contractors that fail to meet the standard on their sites between June 23, 2017 and Sept. 22, 2017, but legally, the standard will still be in effect

OSHA estimates that when the final rule on Occupational Exposure to Respirable Crystalline Silica becomes fully effective, it will save more than 600 lives annually and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis – an incurable and progressive disease – each year. The agency also estimates the final rule will provide net benefits of about \$7.7 billion per year.

About 2.3 million men and women face exposure to respirable crystalline silica in their workplaces, including two million construction workers who drill and cut silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone, and 300,000 workers in operations such as brick manufacturing, foundries and hydraulic fracturing. Most employers can limit harmful dust exposure by using equipment that is widely available – generally using water to keep dust from getting into the air or a ventilation system to capture dust where it is created.

### **Key Provisions**

- Reduces the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift.
- Requires employers to: use engineering controls (such as water or ventilation) to limit worker exposure to the PEL; provide respirators when engineering controls cannot adequately limit exposure; limit worker access to high exposure areas; develop a written exposure control plan, offer medical exams to highly exposed workers, and train workers on silica risks and how to limit exposures.
- Provides medical exams to monitor highly exposed workers and gives them information about their lung health.
- Provides flexibility to help employers — especially small businesses — protect workers from silica exposure

The Builders' Association Safety, Health and Environmental Services Staff provides comprehensive Industrial Hygiene Consulting Services and is ready to assist your organization in complying with the New Crystalline Silica Standard. For more information about OSHA's New Silica Standard please contact Phil Shoemaker, MS, CSP, CHST, STSC by email [pshoemaker@buildersassociation.com](mailto:pshoemaker@buildersassociation.com) or Robert Simmons, MS by email at [rsimmons@buildersassociation.com](mailto:rsimmons@buildersassociation.com).