TOOLBOX TALK

DUST IN THE WORKPLACE

Dust is generated during many construction and maintenance activities, including cutting, drilling, grinding, sanding, breaking out concrete and cleaning work areas.

While dust may appear harmless, breathing in airborne dust can have serious long-term health effects. Dust exposure is often underestimated because the damage may take years to become apparent.

Dust generation must be eliminated where possible or reduced and controlled to protect everyone on site.

The Penny Test

Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) is found in materials such as concrete, bricks, blocks, mortar, stone and tiles.

The amount of harmful RCS dust needed to exceed a daily exposure limit is surprisingly small.

The amount shown next to a penny is enough to put your health at risk over a working day.

Why is Dust Dangerous?

Many construction materials contain substances that can damage your health when inhaled.

Respiratory Issues: Dust particles can irritate the respiratory system, leading to coughing, sneezing, asthma exacerbations, or other breathing problems.

Why Dust is a Serious Health Risk?

These materials release very fine dust particles when cut, drilled or broken. The smallest particles cannot be seen with the naked eye but can travel deep into the lungs.

Health effects of dust exposure can include Silicosis Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Asthma, Lung cancer, Breathing difficulties, Eye, nose and throat irritation.

Control Measures

Control dust at source wherever possible:

- Use wet cutting or water suppression methods.
- Use dust extraction equipment provided.
- Avoid dry sweeping. Use vacuum or damp cleaning methods instead.
- Plan work to minimise dust generation.

Control Dust

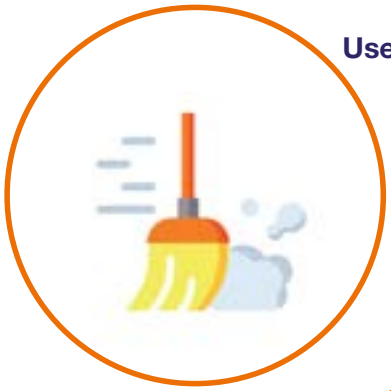
Use the Right Protection

- Wear suitable RPE (Respiratory Protective Equipment).
- Ensure your mask is suitable for the task.
- Follow face fit test requirements.
- Inspect and maintain your RPE before use.

Use the Right Protection

Follow Site Controls

- Follow RAMS and site procedures
- Use the equipment provided.
- Report damaged extraction equipment or missing controls.
- Raise concerns if dust levels appear excessive.



Follow Site Controls

Your Responsibilities

Everyone has a role in preventing dust exposure

- Control dust wherever possible
- Use the equipment provided.
- Protect yourself and others
- Never ignore the risk.

Dust-related illnesses often develop slowly over many years, but the damage can be permanent.

Your Responsibilities

Questions for Discussion

1. What tasks on our sites generate dust?
2. Why can dust be dangerous even when it is not visible?
3. What controls should be used before relying on RPE?
4. What does the penny comparison demonstrate?
5. What should you do if dust controls are not working?

Stay Alert

BRIEFING ATTENDANCE
DUST IN THE WORKPLACE

Given by		*Signature*	
Site Location		*Date*	
Start Time		*Finish Time*	

I HAVE READ OR HAVE BEEN BRIEFED AND UNDERSTAND THE BRIEFING THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME

Name	*Position*	*Date*	*Signature*

Return to Training Dept.
Training Department Action

Recorded ☐ Training Matrix ☐ Documents Filed ☐ Date: .....