



Silica Dust and Health Impacts

Silica dust (also known as respirable crystalline silica or quartz dust) is a common hazard at mines. Because silica dust particles are so small, they can be inhaled easily. Once they are inhaled, these particles remain in the lungs for a long time, causing severe diseases.

How can I be exposed to silica dust?

Miners may breathe silica dust while performing work such as:

- Cutting
- Scraping
- Excavating
- Sawing
- Sanding
- Jackhammering
- Grinding
- Drilling
- Crushing
- Hauling materials

What serious illnesses can be caused by breathing silica dust? Silicosis, lung cancer, other lung diseases (like emphysema or chronic bronchitis), and kidney disease.

Serious Illnesses (cont.)

Early signs of silicosis, lung cancer, and other lung diseases include cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, and difficulty breathing.

Symptoms of kidney disease may include changes in urination, swelling, fatigue, nausea/vomiting, and loss of appetite, among others.

All of these diseases can be long-lasting, irreversible, and potentially disabling or fatal. However, these diseases can be prevented. Miners are encouraged to learn about how they can protect themselves from silica dust and also about what mine operators must do to protect miners from silica dust.

Contact:

To learn more, visit MSHA's website at www.MSHA.gov.

If you have any questions, email ASKMSHA@dol.gov.

