

# GOOD PRACTICES FOR INSTALLATION OF COUNTERTOPS

This task guidance sheet provides good practice guidance for work procedures, personal protective equipment and equipment dedicated to significantly reducing the level of respirable crystalline silica when cutting, grinding or polishing stone surfaces (e.g., engineered stone, natural stone or porcelain) at the installation site (e.g., consumer's home). These guidelines protect both the installer and anyone else in the area.

## ACCESS

Restrict access to the work area to authorised personnel only.

## GENERAL

- If no cutting, grinding, sanding or polishing of the countertops is performed during installation, no respirable crystalline silica should be released.

## PRE-INSTALLATION

- Prepare all slabs in your plant, not at the installation site.
- Clean dust off the front and back of slabs before transporting them to the installation site.
- If significant cutting is required upon installation, return the slabs to the plant for re-cutting.
- Shut down and seal off the local heating/air-conditioning system.

## TOOLS ON SITE

- If performing modifications at the installation site is unavoidable, work outdoors using water-integrated tools.
- If an outdoors area is not available, work indoors using tools with a dust collector connected to a vacuum cleaner with HEPA filter.

## POST-INSTALLATION

- After installation clean the workplace using wet methods or HEPA filtered vacuum cleaner.

## EXAMINATION AND TESTING

- Visually check the equipment and water supply for signs of damage before every use.
- Make sure that the equipment and water supply operates correctly.



- Keep records of inspections for a suitable period of time which complies with national laws (minimum five years).
- Put in place measures to control the risk of bacterial growth within water sources used across site, focusing most on systems where water droplets will be generated.

## CLEANING AND HOUSEKEEPING

- Remove dust in sealed sacks according to local regulations.
- Clean the equipment regularly according to the recommendations of the manufacturer.
- Clean slabs and floor with low pressure wet hosing or wet sweeping.
- Clean dry spillage with HEPA vacuum cleaning systems.
- **DO NOT clean up with a dry brush or using compressed air.**

## TRAINING

- Give your employees information regarding the health effects associated with respirable crystalline silica.
- Provide employees with training on dust exposure prevention; checking controls are working and using them; when and how to use any respiratory protective equipment provided; and what to do if something goes wrong. Refer to task guidance sheet **2.3.4** and part 1 of the Good Practice Guide.

## SUPERVISION

- Have a system to check that control measures are in place and that they are being followed. Refer to task guidance sheet **2.3.3**.
- Employers should make sure that employees have all the means to perform the procedures in the checklist below.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Refer to task guidance sheet **2.1.15** dedicated to personal protective equipment and to task guidance sheet **2.2.37** dedicated to respiratory protective equipment for the slab industry.
- Water-integrated rotating tools generate respirable crystalline silica-contaminated water mist, which may be dispersed and inhaled. For this reason, respiratory protective equipment may be necessary even when using water-integrated tools.
- Indicate areas where personal protective equipment must be worn.
- Use a half face respirator with P3 filter when fabricating with wet manual tools or tools with a dust collector connected to a vacuum cleaner with HEPA filter at the installation site.
- Risk assessment must be carried out to determine whether existing controls are adequate. If necessary, respiratory protective equipment (with the appropriate protection factor) should be provided and worn.
- Provide storage facilities to keep personal protective equipment clean when not in use.
- Replace respiratory protective equipment at intervals recommended by the supplier.

## EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Fabricate all slabs in your plant. If significant cutting is required upon installation, return the slabs to the plant for re-cutting. | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use dry tools! Dry fabrication generates very high levels of respirable crystalline silica. | <input type="checkbox"/> Use a half face respirator when performing any cutting, grinding, sanding, drilling or polishing of countertops at the installation site. | <input type="checkbox"/> Use, maintain and store any respiratory protective equipment provided in accordance with instructions.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure the installation site is well ventilated.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean up spills straight away. Use vacuum or wet cleaning methods. Dispose of spills immediately. | <input type="checkbox"/> Look for signs of damage, wear or poor operation of any equipment used. If you find any problems, tell your supervisor.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Check and implement the measures of controlling the risk of bacterial growth within water sources used across site, focusing most on systems where water droplets will be generated. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At the installation site use wet manual tools or tools with a dust collector connected to a vacuum cleaner with HEPA filter.           |  |  |   |

This guidance sheet is aimed at employers to help them comply with the requirements of workplace health and safety legislation, by controlling exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

Following the key points of this task guidance sheet will help reduce exposure.

Depending on the specific circumstances of each case, it may not be necessary to apply all of the control measures identified in this sheet in order to minimise exposure

to respirable crystalline silica. i.e. to apply appropriate protection and prevention measures. This document should also be made available to persons who may be exposed to respirable crystalline silica in the workplace, in order that they may make the best use of the control measures which are implemented.

This sheet forms part of the Good Practices Guide on silica dust prevention, which is aimed specifically at the control of personal exposure to respirable crystalline silica in the workplace.