



UOSH UPDATE

Silica Rule

The Utah Occupational Safety and Health Division (UOSH) of the Utah Labor Commission will begin enforcing the updated OSHA silica rules beginning October 12, 2018.

The new permissible exposure limit (PEL), for construction and general industry, has been lowered to 50 micrograms of respirable crystalline silica per cubic meter of air ($50 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) averaged over an 8 hour work day. The new PEL is 50% of the previous general industry PEL of $100 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, and 20% of the construction PEL. The previous PELs were based on studies conducted in the 1960s and earlier that did not reflect more recent scientific evidence showing that low-level exposures to silica can cause serious health effects, including lung cancer.

Affected industries include: Glass manufacturing, pottery products, construction, structural clay products, concrete products, foundries, dental labs, painting and coatings, jewelry production, refractory products, ready-mix concrete, cut stone and stone products, abrasive blasting, and oil and gas operations.

Compliance to the new general industry standard (29 CFR 1910.1053) requires employers to use engineering controls and work practices as the primary way to keep exposures at or below the PEL. The employer must limit access to high exposure areas, provide training, provide written exposure control plans, measure exposures in some cases, and provide respiratory protections when controls are not enough to limit exposure.

Compliance to the new construction standard requires employers to follow specified exposure control methods when working with materials containing crystalline silica. These exposure control measures can be found in 29 CFR 1926.1153 Table 1.

Additional information on OSHA's silica rule can be found at www.osha.gov/silica.

UOSH can provide extensive help through a variety of programs, including technical assistance about effective safety and health programs, workplace consultations, and training and education. If you are in need of assistance with these new standards, please contact the UOSH Consultation and Education Services at 801-530-6855. UOSH Consultation and Education Services offers free and confidential occupational safety and health services to Utah employers, with priority given to small business employers in high hazard industries.