

FACT SHEET FOR EMPLOYEES

California Department of Industrial Relations
Division of Occupational Safety & Health | APRIL 2026



Protecting Artificial-Stone Workers from Silicosis and Lung Cancer

What are Silicosis and Silica-Related Lung Cancer?

When workers cut and shape some types of artificial stone countertops they are exposed to high amounts of silica dust. Breathing in silica dust leads to scarring of lung tissue.

This scarring is called silicosis, which is a serious lung disease. Additionally, silica-related lung cancer is a condition in which inhaled silica dust causes cancerous tumors in the lungs.

At first, there may be no symptoms. Within a few years, people may develop coughing, difficulty breathing, fatigue, and chest pain. Both conditions can cause severe disability

and, in many cases, death. Damage caused by silica dust is irreversible.

From 2019 through February 2026, 519 California workers who cut and shaped artificial stone countertops developed silicosis:

- 29 of these 519 workers have died.
- 55 have undergone lung transplants.
- After a lung transplant, most people live less than 10 years on average.

What Must Employers Do?

California laws require employers to protect their workers with the following:



Water

Always use wet methods when making products from artificial stone. Use lots of water. Stone should be completely wet to reduce airborne silica dust. Never dry cut. This includes cleanup after performing this work.



Training

Employers must provide training to employees performing this work. Training must include information on the health effects of silica exposure, safe work practices, and routine health checks.



Respirators

Employers must provide either a powered air-purifying respirator or other respirator with an assigned protection factor of at least 1,000. Employees must use the respirator properly, as directed in the training.

Employee Rights

Employees have the right to:

- Have safe and healthy working conditions.
- Receive training and information from their employer about all job hazards.
- Ask their employer to correct unsafe conditions. Employers are required to fix unsafe conditions, whether they are asked by employees or not.
- File a complaint with Cal/OSHA about workplace safety and health hazards.

More Information

This fact sheet provides only a brief overview of hazards and requirements.

For more information, see the resources below:

- [Silica Hazards in General Industry – Information for Workers](#)
- [How to File a Complaint with Cal/OSHA](#)

This document is available at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications

For questions, employees can contact their nearest Cal/OSHA Enforcement Office. Find contact information at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/DistrictOffices.htm.

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