

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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



General Industry Silica Standard What Employers Need to Know

On February 5, 2025, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board approved permanent changes to Cal/OSHA's respirable crystalline silica (RCS) in general industry regulation, California Code of Regulations, Title 8 [section 5204](#). These changes include important revisions to protect workers engaged in high-exposure trigger tasks such as polishing artificial stone, and other tasks listed in [section 5204\(b\)](#) with more than 0.1% crystalline silica or other silica containing products, including natural stone, with more than 10% crystalline silica.

“Artificial stone” is any reconstituted, artificial, synthetic, composite, engineered, or manufactured stone, porcelain, or quartz typically within a binding material. It usually contains more than 90% crystalline silica. Fired ceramic and porcelain tiles and panels are not artificial stone.

The changes apply to California workers occupationally exposed to RCS, except:

- Construction work covered under [section 1532.3](#).
- Agricultural operations covered under [section 3436](#).
- Exposures that result from the processing of sorptive clays.

Important Revisions Employers Must Address:

Exposure Control Precautions

Use the following precautions to control employee exposure, especially during high-exposure trigger tasks:

- Effectively suppress dust where a tool or machine contacts the work surface, by using one of the following methods:
 - Applying a constant flow of water that fully covers the contact area.
 - Submerging the work object under water.
 - Using water-jet cutting.
- Conduct tasks in regulated areas identified by warning signs. The signage must include the following, in English and Spanish:



DANGER

RESPIRABLE CRYSTALLINE SILICA
CAUSES PERMANENT LUNG DAMAGE THAT MAY LEAD TO DEATH
MAY CAUSE CANCER
WEAR RESPIRATORY PROTECTION IN THIS AREA
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
PELIGRO
SÍLICE CRISTALINA RESPIRABLE
PROVOCA DAÑO PERMANENTE A LOS PULMONES QUE PODRÍA CAUSAR LA MUERTE
PUEDE PROVOCAR CÁNCER
USAR PROTECCIÓN RESPIRATORIA EN ESTA ÁREA
SOLO PERSONAL AUTORIZADO

- Control dust during housekeeping and maintenance work by:
 - Cleaning up debris often to prevent dust buildup.
 - Using only wet methods or high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuums.
 - Prohibiting dry sweeping or use of compressed air to clean surfaces or clothing.
- Not allow employee rotation as an exposure control.
- Prohibit walking or moving equipment through dry dust.

[Section 5204\(g\)](#) allows Cal/OSHA to quickly shut down an operation if work violates the regulation and endangers employees' health.

Respiratory Protection

Employers must provide employees exposed to high-exposure trigger tasks with a full-face, tight-fitting powdered-air purifying respirator (PAPR), a helmet or hood PAPR with an assigned protection factor of 1000, or another respirator that provides equal or greater protection, equipped with a HEPA, N100, R100, or P100 filter.

[Section 5204\(h\)\(3\)\(A\)](#) describes limited situations where respirators that provide less protection may be used if they are equipped with HEPA, N100, R100, or P100 filters.

Respirators must be used in accordance with a respiratory protection program that meets the requirements of [section 5144](#).

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Written Exposure Control Plan

Expand the written exposure control plan to include:

- Air monitoring records showing that engineering controls for high-exposure trigger tasks keep RCS exposure below the action level (AL) of 25 µg/m³ as an 8-hour time-weighted average.
- Procedures for the proper use of personal protective equipment.
- Documentation that carcinogen use has been reported to Cal/OSHA as required by [section 5203](#).
- Training procedures to ensure employees can prevent RCS exposures.
- Procedures to provide medical surveillance and removal.

Employee Communication and Training

Ensure employees understand the following:

- How to use required dust control methods, including work practices and respiratory protection.
- The health hazards of RCS and symptoms of exposure, such as cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, shortness of breath, weakness, fever, chest pain, or unexpected weight loss.
- That RCS exposure can increase the health risks from smoking and tuberculosis.
- They should seek medical attention if they experience symptoms related to RCS exposure. Early diagnosis and treatment are important.

Beginning July 1, 2026, employers must submit an electronic written attestation to Cal/OSHA annually confirming that employees who perform high-exposure trigger tasks have received the required training. Submitting a false attestation is unlawful.

Employee Exposure Monitoring

Scheduled employee airborne exposure monitoring is required to be performed by a qualified person for all high-exposure trigger tasks at least every 12 months to ensure dust controls are working properly. The frequency that monitoring needs to be repeated can increase as specified by [section 5204\(d\)\(3\)](#).

“Qualified Person” means a third party independent of the employer who, by extensive instruction, knowledge, training, and experience, has demonstrated their ability to effectively perform and interpret the results of representative air monitoring for occupational exposure to respirable crystalline silica. The qualified person shall be knowledgeable in section 5204 and shall be competent in industrial hygiene practice. A Certified Industrial Hygienist as codified in California’s Business and Professions Code sections 20700-20705 is considered competent in industrial hygiene practice.

Medical Surveillance and Removal

Employers must make an initial medical examination available to employees who perform high-exposure trigger tasks for 30 days or more per year or are exposed above the AL 30 days or more per year.

Medical examinations must be made available at least every three years, or more often, if recommended by a physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP).

Employers must retain worker’s earnings, seniority, and other benefits for up to six months if the PLHCP recommends an employee be removed from a job assignment to reduce exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

Reporting Silicosis and Silica-Related Lung Cancer Cases

Immediately report any confirmed silicosis or silica-related lung cancer case to [Cal/OSHA](#) and the [California Department of Public Health](#).

More Information

This executive summary provides only a brief overview of the requirements. For more information, see the resources below:

- [Section 5204 – Occupational Exposures to Respirable Crystalline Silica](#)
- [Cal/OSHA Respirable Crystalline Silica Standards and Resources webpage](#)
- [“Silica General Industry Exposure Control Model Plan”](#)
- [“When to Report Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses”](#)

