

From: [Anita Cecil](#)
To: [DIR RS](#)
Subject: Public comment in support of emergency rulemaking to prohibit fabrication of engineered stone countertops containing more than 1% crystalline silica
Date: Tuesday, September 29, 2026 4:07:02 PM

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Dear Cal/OSHA Standards Board,

I am writing in support of the Emergency Rulemaking to Prohibit the Fabrication of Engineered Stone Countertops Containing More than One Percent Crystalline Silica.

For me, the danger of silica exposure is not simply an occupational health issue. It is part of my family's history.

I am the granddaughter of Charles and Emma Jones, whose family was directly affected by the Hawks Nest Tunnel disaster in West Virginia. My grandparents lost three of their sons, my uncles Cecil, Owen, and Shirley Jones, following their work in the tunnel. My grandfather Charles survived. My grandparents later testified about what happened to their family, and their story became part of the historical record of one of the worst occupational silica disasters in American history.

Their story was also preserved by poet Muriel Rukeyser in *The Book of the Dead*. In "Absalom," she gave voice to my grandmother Emma and the sons she lost. Because of that work and the historical record surrounding Hawks Nest, my family's experience continues to be studied and remembered nearly a century later.

That history makes it especially troubling to see workers today facing serious and potentially fatal disease from exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

The circumstances of modern engineered stone fabrication are different from those at Hawks Nest, but the fundamental lesson should not have to be learned again. Workers should not have to become sick or die before we take known occupational hazards seriously.

I also see this from a professional vantage point. As the area administrator of the West Virginia Disability Determination Services, I oversee the adjudication of disability claims. A disability adjudicator reviews medical evidence and work histories to determine whether an illness or injury has left a person unable to work. Case after case, I see what deficiencies in workplace safety can cause.

My family knows the human cost of silica exposure. Behind every worker who becomes ill is a family that may live with the consequences for generations. I am one of those descendants.

We cannot change what happened to the workers at Hawks Nest or to my family. But we can decide what we do with the lessons their suffering left us.

I urge you to adopt and enforce this emergency rule without delay and prohibit the fabrication of engineered stone countertops containing more than one percent crystalline silica. Please act before more workers become sick and more families are left to live with preventable loss.

Nearly a century ago, my grandparents had to testify about the deaths of their sons so that others would understand what silica exposure had done to their family. Their experience should not simply be remembered. It should compel us to protect workers today.

My uncles cannot be brought back. The workers who died at Hawks Nest cannot be brought back. But workers who are at risk today can still be protected.

Please act now.

Thank you for considering my comments and for taking the health and lives of workers seriously.

Sincerely,

Anita Cecil
Granddaughter of Charles and Emma Jones
Hawks Nest Tunnel family descendant