



A Tradition of Stewardship
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Board of Supervisors

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Amber Manfree
Chair

September 25, 2026

(via email)

Cal/OSHA Research & Standards Branch

RS@dir.ca.gov

Re: SUPPORT for Emergency Rulemaking to Prohibit the Fabrication of Engineered Stone Countertops Containing More than One Percent Crystalline Silica- Section 5204.1/ Engineered Stone Crystalline Silica Rule

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Napa County Board of Supervisors and our Public Health Officer, I am writing in strong support of Cal/OSHA's draft regulation to add Section 5204.1 with proposed changes to sections 5204 and 1532.3 that prohibits the fabrication and manufacture of artificial stone with more than 1% crystalline silica.

Silicosis is a serious, incurable and ultimately fatal occupational lung disease that at present disproportionately affects young Latino men. Through public health investigations, it is clear that the primary cause of Silicosis is the inhalation of silica dust associated with countertop fabrication with engineered stone, the popularity of which exploded in the US market over the past ten to twenty years. Similarly, since state public health started tracking this disease in 2019, there has been an exponential rise in cases. California currently sees one new Silicosis case reported every day and one reported death each month. These are still likely to be undercounted and expected to escalate as there is increasing recognition of this disease.

For people working in the artificial stone fabricator industry, the exposure to silica is so concentrated that the disease often progresses rapidly and requires lung transplantation to prevent imminent death. Life expectancy from initial diagnosis often falls between a few months to five years. If caught early and dust exposure stops, a person with mild chronic silicosis may survive with a poor quality of life as their lung function continues to deteriorate over time. Symptoms of silicosis include a particularly violent and pervasive cough that can result in fractured ribs, sharp pain with each breath, and suffering from "air hunger," best described as the feeling of suffocating or drowning as the patient's lungs stiffen and scar down from the silica dust lodged in them. People with silicosis also become highly susceptible to fatal lung conditions like infectious tuberculosis (silicotuberculosis), lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and progressive massive fibrosis (PMF).

We commend Cal/OSHA's past efforts to require protective measures through an education, inspection, cite, and fine program. However, it is clear that compliance with those requirements remains an issue and that the regulatory controls did not eliminate this occupational hazard. Emerging data indicates silica dust from fabricated stone release massive quantities of nano-crystalline silica that are under 100 nanometers and that the protective measures were likely not fully effective. We agree with the Western Occupational

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and Environmental Medicine Association's Petition 609 that artificial stone with more than 1% crystalline silica is too toxic to fabricate and install safely and that education for worker protection and enforcement alone has not been sufficient to stop the explosion of this deadly illness.

The Board of Supervisors is in full support of Cal/OSHA moving to a product threshold rather than relying solely on workplace exposure measurements and further supports the prohibition of all fabrication and manufacture of artificial stone with more than 1% crystalline silica.

We urge Cal/OSHA to consider adding clarity to this rule around installation of countertops containing more than 1% crystalline silica and explicitly prohibit installation in addition to the existing draft prohibition of its fabrication and manufacture. Installation involves additional cutting and adjustment, which exposes installation workers to silica in the same way as fabrication and manufacture of the countertops. At baseline, we propound that there is no safe amount of silica dust for workers. Any drilling and cutting of artificial stone, especially on-site during installation, is a hazard for people who work in this industry. The import of artificial stone from outside California creates a loophole to the current proscription of fabrication and manufacture that would impact on-site workers and should be closed through strong regulatory drafting.

We also urge Cal/OSHA to also provide clarity through written guidance as to the narrow exceptions for "minor" onsite adjustments of pre-fabricated pieces during the implementation grace period and enforcement details for the rule.

Finally, we expect the affected industry to rally against this commendable effort. We respectfully request that CAL/OSHA stand firm and protect the health of California workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amber Manfree". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amber" and last name "Manfree" clearly distinguishable.

Amber Manfree
Chair, Napa County Board of Supervisors

cc:

Ryan Alsop, Chief Executive Officer
Senator Christopher Cabaldon
Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Jennifer Yasumoto, Napa County Health and Human Services Agency Director
Christine Wu, Napa County Public Health Officer