# Dust toolbox talk: dust control on the job

29 CFR 1910.1200, 1926.55, 1926.1153, 1910.134, 1926.25

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

**Opening question**

**What is making dust on this site today, and how much of it ends up in the air you breathe?**

## Why it matters

When we cut, grind, drill, sand or sweep, dust gets into the air. The finest particles are too small to see and can travel deep into your lungs. Over time, some dusts can cause lung disease, asthma or cancer, and some of that damage cannot be undone.

## Key points

1. **Know what is in your dust**
   Concrete, block, brick, mortar, many types of stone and engineered stone contain crystalline silica, and breathing silica dust can cause silicosis, lung cancer and kidney disease. Wood dust can irritate your eyes, nose, throat and skin and cause asthma, and some wood dusts can cause cancer. OSHA's hazard communication standard does not exempt wood that may be sawed or cut, generating dust. Check the safety data sheet (SDS) for what you cut, grind or sand.
   29 CFR 1910.1200(b)(6)(iv)

2. **Pick a method that makes less dust**
   The best dust is the dust you never make. Under OSHA's air contaminant rules for construction, engineering or administrative controls must be used first whenever feasible, with protective equipment used when those controls cannot fully meet the exposure limits. Choose methods that make less dust, like splitting pavers instead of sawing them or scoring and snapping drywall.
   29 CFR 1926.55(b)

3. **Control dust at the tool**
   Use tools with a water feed or a shroud hooked to a vacuum or dust collector, and keep the water or vacuum running the whole time. For construction tasks listed in Table 1 of OSHA's silica standard, the employer must fully and properly put the listed engineering controls, work practices and respiratory protection in place, unless it assesses and limits exposure another way. When Table 1 calls for wet methods, water must flow fast enough to minimize the release of visible dust (29 CFR 1926.1153(c)(2)(ii)). If you see a dust cloud, stop and fix the control.
   29 CFR 1926.1153(c)(1)

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### 4 Clean up without making more dust

The employer must not allow dry sweeping or dry brushing that could add to silica exposure unless wet sweeping, HEPA-filtered vacuuming or other methods that minimize the likelihood of exposure are not feasible (29 CFR 1926.1153(f)(1) and 29 CFR 1910.1053(h)(1)). The same standards restrict cleaning clothes or surfaces with compressed air (29 CFR 1926.1153(f)(2) and 29 CFR 1910.1053(h)(2)). Use a HEPA vacuum or wet the dust down, and empty dust bags and collectors carefully.

29 CFR 1926.1153(f)(1)

### 5 Use respirators as backup, not the first fix

A respirator backs up dust controls; it does not replace them. OSHA's respiratory protection standard, which construction also follows (29 CFR 1926.103), calls for engineering controls first, as far as feasible, and appropriate respirators when those controls are not feasible or while they are being put in place. A tight-fitting respirator must be fit tested before first use, whenever you switch facepieces and at least annually, and your employer may not let you wear one with facial hair that comes between the seal and your face (29 CFR 1910.134(f)(2) and (g)(1)(i)(A)).

29 CFR 1910.134(a)(1)

### 6 Leave the dust at work

Bag or cover dusty waste before you move it; in construction, containers for hazardous wastes such as harmful dusts must have covers. Wash your hands and face before you eat, drink or smoke. HEPA vacuum your clothes or change them before you get in your vehicle, so you do not carry dust home.

29 CFR 1926.25(c)

## Scenario

Picture this: Two workers are sanding drywall and cutting hardwood trim in a closed room. The saw's dust bag is full, so they pull it off and keep cutting. At lunch, one dry sweeps the floor, the other blows off his shirt with an air hose, and they eat right there. What went wrong, and what should they have done differently?

## Crew discussion

1. Which tasks on our job make the most dust, and what control does each one use?
2. How do we check that the water feed or vacuum works before we cut?
3. What will we clean up with instead of a broom or an air hose?

**Bottom line**

**Know what is in your dust, control it at the tool, clean up wet or with a HEPA vacuum, and use a respirator when controls are not enough.**

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# Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Dust control / Control de polvo

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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