

Health Surveillance for Silica

Mandatory where exposure is significant · records kept for 40 years

Scope and limitations — read before use

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1. Why it matters more in this trade than any other

Silicosis from engineered stone has appeared in workers within months or years rather than the decades seen with natural stone. Permanent lung damage occurs before the worker feels anything. By the time somebody is breathless, it is already too late to reverse. Health surveillance is the only way to catch it while there is still something to be done.

2. What it involves

Stage	What happens	Frequency
Baseline	Respiratory questionnaire and lung function testing (spirometry) before or at the start of exposure	On appointment
Periodic	Questionnaire and spirometry repeated	Usually annually — take competent advice on the interval for your exposures
Chest imaging	Where indicated by the assessment or by findings	As advised by the occupational health provider
Referral	Where symptoms or test results indicate a problem, referral to an occupational health physician	As needed
Exit	Assessment when the worker leaves the job or the exposure ends	On leaving

3. Your duties

- Identify every worker exposed and put them under surveillance.
- Use a competent occupational health provider.
- Keep an individual health record for each worker for AT LEAST 40 YEARS from the last entry. These diseases take decades to appear and the records may be needed long after the person has left.
- If a worker is diagnosed with silicosis, review the assessment and controls immediately for everybody, not just that person.
- Certain diagnosed conditions are reportable to HSE under RIDDOR. Check the current guidance.

- The employer receives fitness advice and any restrictions. The clinical detail stays confidential to the worker and the health professional.
- If the business closes, the health records must be offered to HSE.

4. Health surveillance register

Name	Start of exposure	Baseline date	Last assessment	Next due	Outcome	Restrictions	Referred?

5. Symptoms workers must report immediately

- Shortness of breath, especially on exertion or worse than it used to be
- A persistent cough that will not clear
- Chest tightness or wheezing
- Unusual tiredness
- Any chest infection that keeps coming back

Make it clear that reporting symptoms will never cost anybody their job. A worker who hides symptoms because they are frightened of losing work will be far sicker by the time you find out, and the claim against you will be far larger.

Assessed by	Signature	Date	Review date