

# Toolbox Talks and Forms

Four briefings, plus the records

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## TOOLBOX TALK 1

# Silica — the dust that kills young men in this trade

### Key points

- Engineered stone can be up to 95% crystalline silica. Granite is roughly a quarter to a third. The engineered material is in a different league.
- At least four people in the UK have died from artificial stone silicosis and more than fifty have been diagnosed since 2023. One of them was 28 years old.
- With engineered stone the disease has appeared within months or years, not decades.
- You cannot see, taste or feel the particles that do the damage, and there is no early symptom. By the time you are breathless the damage is permanent.
- The exposure limit is 0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> over a shift. Minutes of dry cutting blows straight through it.

### Ask the group

- What materials are we working with this week and what is the silica content?
- Where in our process is the dustiest job?
- Has anyone here noticed getting short of breath on stairs or a cough that will not shift?

### Attendance

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## TOOLBOX TALK 2

# Dry cutting — why it has to stop

### Key points

- HSE has made clear that dry cutting of stone worktops must stop, and is running a programme of over a thousand fabricator inspections.
- Firms have already been ordered to STOP WORK for failing to control silica. That closes the business, not just fines it.
- HSE research found dry fabrication gives five to ten times the exposure of wet methods with the same tools.
- Water has to be at the point of cut, at the right flow, running the whole time. A quick dry nick to finish an edge is exactly the moment that does the harm.
- If a job appears to need dry cutting, stop and ask how it can be done wet or in the machine instead.

### Ask the group

- Is there any point in our process where we still cut dry, even briefly?
- Are all our water feeds working properly and at the right flow?
- What would we do if a customer asked for a change on site that needed a dry cut?

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## TOOLBOX TALK 3

# Masks, beards and face-fit

### Key points

- A mask is the last line of defence, not the first. Water and extraction do the real work.
- Every tight-fitting mask must be face-fit tested for that exact make, model and size, by a competent tester, and recorded.
- Stubble breaks the seal. Not a beard — stubble. If you will not be clean shaven you need a powered hood, and we will provide one.
- Fit-check every time you put it on. It takes seconds.
- Filter changes and cleaning slurry are among the highest exposure moments of the week. Wear the mask for those too.

### Ask the group

- When was everyone here last face-fit tested?
- Is anybody wearing a mask that has never been tested on them?
- Who needs a powered hood rather than a tight-fitting mask?

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## TOOLBOX TALK 4

# Housekeeping — the dust you make twice

### Key points

- Wet cutting controls the dust while you cut. When the slurry dries on the floor and the benches, it becomes airborne dust all over again.
- Never dry sweep. Never use compressed air to blow down benches, machines or your clothes.
- Squeegee and remove slurry while it is wet. Use an M or H class vacuum for anything dry.
- Do not take dusty workwear home. Fibres and dust carried home have harmed families in other trades and there is no reason to think this is different.
- Eat and drink in a clean area, having washed your hands and face.

### Ask the group

- How do we clean down at the end of the day, honestly?
- Is there compressed air in the workshop being used to blow dust off anything?
- How is our workwear laundered?

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## Daily dust control check

| Check                                                | OK | Not OK | Action |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|--------|--------|
| Water feeds working on all wet tools, correct flow   |    |        |        |
| No dry cutting taking place anywhere                 |    |        |        |
| Enclosures and interlocks working                    |    |        |        |
| LEV units running, filters and airflow indicators OK |    |        |        |
| Extraction hoses undamaged and unkinked              |    |        |        |
| RPE available, clean, correct filters fitted         |    |        |        |
| All RPE wearers clean shaven                         |    |        |        |
| Floors clear of dried slurry                         |    |        |        |
| No compressed air being used for cleaning down       |    |        |        |
| Vacuum available and working (M or H class)          |    |        |        |
| Clean area for eating and drinking, hands washed     |    |        |        |
| Workwear arrangements being followed                 |    |        |        |

| Checked by | Signature | Date | Actions closed |
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|            |           |      |                |

## Silica training record

| Name | Silica awareness training | Date | RPE training and fit test | Refresher due |
|------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|---------------|
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