WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY?

TIPS FOR WORKERS EXPOSED TO CRYSSTALLINE SILICA

Become Informed
- Be aware of the health effects of breathing air that has silica dust in it.
- Know what causes silica dust at your workplace.

Reduce Your Exposure to Dust
- Remember, even if there is no dust, you could still be at risk.
- Avoid working in dust whenever possible.
- Reduce the amount of silica dust by doing the following:
  - Use water sprays and ventilation when working in confined structures. For example:
    - Use a water hose to wet dust before it becomes airborne.
    - Use saws that add water to the blade.
    - Use drills that add water through the stem or have dust collection systems.
    - Use blast cleaning machines or cabinets to control dust.

Use Respirators When Needed
- When water sprays and ventilation alone are not enough to reduce silica dust levels, your employer MUST provide you with a properly fitted and selected respirator (e.g., particulate filter or airline supplied air respirator) designated for protection against crystalline silica.
- Changes should not be made to the respirator.
- Workers who use tight-fitting respirators may not have beards or mustaches because they do not let the respirator properly seal to the face.
- Sandblasting or abrasive blasting requires the highest level of protection, which is a type CE abrasive blasting respirator.

Participate in Medical Screening
- Take health (or lung screening) programs offered by your employer.

Practice Good Personal Hygiene at the Workplace
- Do not eat, drink, or use tobacco products in dusty areas.
- Wash hands and face before eating, drinking, or smoking outside dusty areas.
- Change into disposable or washable work clothes at the worksite.
- Shower (if possible) and change into clean clothes before leaving the worksite to prevent contamination of other work areas, cars, and homes.
- Park cars where they will not be contaminated with silica.

It is your employer’s legal responsibility to provide a safe workplace. If you think you are not protected call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) or go to the OSHA Web site: www.osha.gov.

Your employer must make sure that you have and use the proper protective equipment for reducing silica dust levels.

Taking time to protect yourself on the job is worth it.

(Adapted from NIOSH Publication No. 2004-108: Silicosis: Learn the Facts!)