

**STATEMENT OF  
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US Department of Labor  
Occupational Safety & Health Administration  
*OSHA Standard Addressing Silica Exposure*

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My name is Alan White. I am 48 years old. I live and work in Buffalo, New York, at a foundry and am a member of the United Steelworkers Local Union 593.

Four years ago, I went to a doctor and after a series of tests he told me that I will die from exposure to silica in my workplace.

Working at the foundry had been a goal for me. My father worked at the foundry before me, my brother works there now. Eighteen years ago I was excited to get a job at the foundry. At that time I was a single parent, making ends meet with assistance from the government. When I got my job at the foundry I made more than \$60,000 the first year and thought I was set. I was ready and willing to give my all to work. But I never realized that that included my life.

I still work at the same company, but in a different part of the plant where there is less silica exposure.

At work we focus on safety, but the company focuses on obvious safety hazards. They tell us to be careful of slips and trips and mind the heat. They tell us to lift properly and be careful of traffic in the plant. But, they did not tell us about the unseen dangers. They never told me about silica and the health effects that breathing it can cause.

I have always been in good physical condition. I don't smoke, I don't drink, I eat organic foods, I don't eat much red meat. Now I know that my lifestyle probably won't benefit my long-term health, because of the devastating effects of silica exposure. As a new grandfather, I probably will not be able to run with my grandchild through the park as I had hoped. Even simple tasks like walking while talking on a cell phone are difficult and my outlook is downhill from here. I live about one mile from work. I tried to walk home from work the other day and it took more than an hour because my lungs can't keep up with the pace of a slow walk. The progression of silicosis reduces my physical endurance over time and is very difficult to experience. In the past I have just been able to deal with the pain

and the effects of this illness, but in the future walking short distances or climbing a few steps will be very difficult or impossible for me. Eventually I won't be able to work at the plant. I will probably be too young to retire or use my 401K. I don't know what I will do.

Mankind has known that silica is a serious health hazard for thousands of years. Employers know that they can control silica exposure to workers. This is not rocket science. This is basic workplace engineering to control this hazardous exposure.

My health will not improve, but as OSHA moves forward with this silica standard other workers will be able to enjoy their time with their grandchildren.

Thank you.