

**STATEMENT OF
MR. FRANK HEARL, CHIEF OF STAFF
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

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NIOSH is pleased to join with Dr. Michaels and our partners in labor and industry in OSHA's announcement of the notice of proposed rulemaking on occupational exposure to crystalline silica. NIOSH has a long history of research and recommendations on preventing worker exposure to respirable crystalline silica. Today's announcement marks a long awaited important step in improving the safety and health of workers across the nation.

In 1974, NIOSH published "Criteria for a Recommended Standard: Occupational Exposure to Crystalline Silica," in which NIOSH recommended that the exposure limit be reduced to 50 micrograms per cubic meter (50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), which is the level OSHA is proposing in the Notice published today. In the years following the publication of this Criteria Document, NIOSH continued to promote prevention of silicosis through a series of Alerts, guidance documents, and workplace solutions; and through participation with OSHA in a coordinated Silicosis Prevention Initiative.

Workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica face the risk of serious, and sometimes fatal, health effects such as silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, increased risk of some lung infections such as tuberculosis, and other systemic health issues. Ensuring the health and safety of all workers is an important part of ensuring a strong economy and future economic growth.