

Is this a final rule?

- No. This is only a proposed rule—a suggestion the agency is putting forward for consideration and discussion. It does not have any immediate impact on the affected industries, nor is it enforceable.

How can I participate in the silica rulemaking process?

- OSHA's rulemaking process relies heavily on input from the public, including the regulated community and other stakeholders. OSHA will hold an extensive, months long process to obtain input from the public through both written and oral comments. Comments regarding OSHA's proposed silica rule can be submitted until February 11, 2014. Members of the public who already requested more than 10 minutes to present testimony at the hearings also must submit their written testimony and documentary evidence by February 11, 2014. After that OSHA will hold public hearings. Following the hearings, members of the public that filed a notice of intention to appear can then submit additional post hearing comments. Additional information on the proposed rule, procedures for submitting comments, and the public hearings can be found at www.osha.gov/silica.

How can exposure to crystalline silica affect workers' health?

- Inhalation of very small crystalline silica particles causes silicosis, an incurable lung disease that can lead to disability and death. Crystalline silica exposure also puts workers at risk for developing lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and kidney disease.

Who is at risk from exposure to crystalline silica?

- Simply being in proximity to sand or other silica-containing materials does not present a hazard; respirable dust must be generated and released into the air to create the hazard. Respirable crystalline silica—very small particles, typically at least 100 times smaller than ordinary sand you might encounter on beaches and playgrounds—is generated from operations involving stone, rock, concrete, brick, block, mortar, and industrial sand. Exposures to respirable crystalline silica can occur when cutting, sawing, grinding, drilling, and crushing these materials. Activities that generate respirable dust include: using sand in abrasive blasting; sawing brick or concrete; sanding or drilling into concrete walls; grinding mortar; manufacturing brick, concrete blocks, or ceramic products; and cutting or crushing stone.

What are the benefits of the proposed rule?

- Once the full effects of the rule are realized, the proposed rule is expected to prevent thousands of deaths from silicosis, lung cancer, other respiratory diseases, and kidney disease; OSHA estimates that the proposed rule will save nearly 700 lives each year and prevent 1,600 new cases of silicosis annually.
- The proposed rule is estimated to provide average net benefits of about \$2.8 to \$4.7 billion annually over the next 60 years.

Why is OSHA proposing a crystalline silica rule?

- OSHA's current permissible exposure limits (PELs) for silica are antiquated and do not adequately protect worker health. The current PELs are based on research from the 1960's and earlier and do not reflect more recent scientific evidence. Since the current PELs were established in 1971, the U.S. National Toxicology Program, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have all identified respirable crystalline silica as a human carcinogen. The current PELs for construction and shipyards are based on an obsolete method of measuring worker exposures to silica. The current PELs are also inconsistent; the PELs for construction and shipyards allow workers in those sectors to be exposed to silica levels over twice as high as levels allowed in general industry. The proposed standard is intended to reduce the risk of disease among workers who inhale respirable crystalline silica on the job and to provide consistent protection for all workers covered.

Additional information about the proposed rule is available at www.osha.gov/silica. The website has two videos and five fact sheets that further explain the hazards of occupational exposure to silica, the provisions of the proposed rule and how to participate in the development of a final rule.