## **Preventing Silicosis Stats and Fact**



## **FACTS**

- 1. Silica is a mineral found in sand, sandstone, shale, and granite. When workers drill, crush, chip or break materials that contain crystalline silica, large amounts of respirable crystalline silica can form as dust.
- 2. The dust particles are microscopic, so they can penetrate deep into a worker?s lungs if inhaled, eventually affecting a person?s ability to breathe.
- 3. When silica dust enters the lungs, it causes inflammation which over time leads to the development of scar tissue.
- 4. Cigarette smoking adds to the lung damage caused by silicosis. Quitting smoking is an important part of managing the disease.
- 5. Complications from silicosis can include tuberculosis, lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, autoimmune disorders, and kidney disease
- 6. There is no cure for silicosis, but treatment is available, and employers and workers can take steps to prevent it.
- 7. Acute silicosis causes coughing, weight loss and fatigue within a few weeks or years of exposure to inhaled silica.
- 8. Chronic silicosis appears roughly 10 to 30 years after exposure and can cause extensive lung scarring, particularly in the upper lungs.
- 9. Accelerated silicosis occurs within 10 years of high-level exposure.

## STATS

- Government has certified and compensated over 25,000 patients of silicosis, of which 5,500 have already died of the disease.
- Experts estimate 1 to 2 million U.S. workers are still exposed to silica.
- Approximately 2,000 workers were digging a tunnel through high-silica rock with no respiratory protection. As many as 1,500 men died as a result of inhaling silica dust.
- Approximately 2.3 million U.S. workers are exposed to silica in the workplace, including 2 million in construction and 300,000 in other industries.
- Each year, more than 250 American workers die with silicosis.
- More than 100,000 workers in the United States encounter high-risk, silica exposures through sandblasting, rock drilling and mining.