WHAT IS SILICOSIS?

SILICOSIS IS A LUNG DISEASE THAT IS CAUSED BY INHALING FINE SILICA DUST, OFTEN IMPACTING THOSE WHO WORK WITH STONE OR SAND OVER A 7-10-YEAR PERIOD

COPD

ASTHMA

COMMON MISDIAGNOSIS

UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION

PNEUMONIA

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- PERSISTANT COUGH
- WEIGHT LOSS
- FATIGUE
- CYANOSIS

"...I THINK THAT AS A WORKER, ONE DOES NOT REALIZE THAT THE WORK, AS BEAUTIFUL AS IT IS, IS ALSO HARMFUL AND NOBODY EXPLAINS THAT."

- Ever Ramón

SCAN HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION



ENGINEERED STONE COUNTERTOP SILICOSIS

Enhancing Awareness and Preventing Occupational Health Tragedies

WHY IT MATTERS

Incurable and Progressive: Silicosis is a chronic lung disease with no cure. Early diagnosis is essential to slow disease progression and manage symptoms, but prevention is the only way to avoid it completely.

Under-Reported: In many regions, silicosis is not required to be reported by health authorities, making it difficult to track cases, assess risk, and enforce workplace regulations.

Long latency Period: Symptoms can take up to 10 years to appear, meaning that many who are exposed today may not show symptoms until years later. This silent latency will lead to a rapid increase in cases as past exposures catch up.

STAKEHOLDERS

Medical Professionals: The individuals at the forefront of the solution. By increasing the number of correctly diagnosed cases, the epicenters of exposure will become more easily identifiable, allowing for shops to be targeted and workers to be protected.

Workers: The vulnerable population. They are often unaware of the threat posed by synthetic countertops, and unaware of how to advocate for themselves.

OSHA: They are enforcing existing regulations and citing violations with corresponding monetary fines; however, the shops only respond with change when the economic burden placed on them exceeds their profits made.

Industry Perspective: The industry is made of many small shops who often cannot afford to put in place proper safety measures.

CURRENT CHALLENGES WITH PROTECTING WORKERS

PPE

Employees should be required to wear respirators that are properly fitted, cleaned at the end of each shift, and stored properly. They should also receive medical evaluations to ensure they are healthy enough to wear respirators. Without these actions, workers may not be adequately protected from exposure to silica dust.

ENGINEERING CONTROLS

Wet methods are used in many workshops, reducing the amount of silica dust particles in the air. Employers should be implementing additional ventilation systems and making sure that any water recycling systems filter out silica particles.

ELIMINATION/SUBSTITUTION

Engineered stone was completely banned in Australia, as of July 2024, and the markets are shifting to alternative products which reduce employee exposure to silica dust.

FUTURE STEPS

Contact Embassies to get information about companies funding the transportation of bodies back to their home countries to avoid the families filing law suits

Conduct Interviews with impacted individuals and their families to gain insight on affected populations and build trust to enhance future reporting

Develop methods to track silicosis cases (possibly by first making silicosis a reportable disease) and determine the regulation changes and data informatics that would be needed