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.