



Office of
Industrial Relations

1 8 SEP 2018

Department of Education

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Protection of workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica

I am writing to alert you to the serious risks to workers' health posed by exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) in engineered stone benchtop manufacturing, finishing and installation industries. The attached safety alert on this matter was issued on 18 September 2018.

In addition, I would like to advise you of a compliance campaign Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) has commenced in this area. Your business has been identified as one that may fabricate materials that are high in silica content.

As a duty holder under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* you must ensure the safety of your workers and ensure they wear respiratory protective equipment. You also have further obligations in relation to monitoring the health of your workers through the use of health practitioners.

The enclosed document "*Protecting workers from exposure to respirable crystalline silica*" outlines the risks posed by RCS and highlights practical measures that can be taken to reduce the risks to health of your workers. In accordance with your obligation to provide information to workers to protect them from risks to their health, you should immediately notify staff about the risks posed by RCS and distribute this enclosed document to all workers at your workplace that may be exposed to RCS. **If you are performing dry cutting, you must immediately cease dry stone cutting methods. In addition you are required to implement appropriate controls and health screening of your workers.**

Detailed information on your obligations and how they may be discharged are found in this document and in the resources identified under 'Further guidance'. Inspectors from WHSQ will shortly conduct visits at all Queensland workplaces that fabricate artificial stone containing silica and will check compliance with safety laws, including checks relating to:

- prohibitions on dry cutting of stone
- the wearing of respiratory protective equipment
- implementing controls to lower exposure to silica dust
- health monitoring of workers
- consultation with workers
- the provision of relevant information to workers.

1 William Street Brisbane
Queensland 4000 Australia
GPO Box 69 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
WorkSafe +61 7 3247 4711
Website www.worksafe.qld.gov.au
www.business.qld.gov.au
ABN 94 496 188 983

I strongly advise you to familiarise yourself with your obligations and do all that you can to ensure that you are meeting the standards required to protect workers.

I have also enclosed a factsheet which provides information for worker's in relation to their workers' compensation rights in Queensland.

If you have further queries after considering the enclosed document and the guidance material within it, please contact Ms Carolyn Topping, Principal Advisor (Occupational Hygiene), WHSQ, on 07 3874 7583.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Blackwood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Simon Blackwood
Work Health Safety Regulator
Office of Industrial Relations