



Hurst Setter & Associates Ltd

Health Safety & Environmental Newsletter

August 2021

Hurst Setter aims to provide commercially sound health and safety advice, practical on-site assistance, and training services to help clients to improve their overall health, safety and environmental performance and business efficiency. Health & safety is no longer a business where you just find fault and try to 'stop the job', it is now a role where a common sense approach needs to be applied to ensure a job can be completed safely ensuring that everyone returns home from work to their families at the end of the working day.

At the same time as being an external consultancy who are used for expert advice, we also work really hard to ensure they are part of the team for all clients. Hurst Setter pride themselves in being able to use expert knowledge of the industry and legislation to be a cog in the wheel to help our clients achieve their health & safety goals.

The company was established in 1992, we have an experienced team of professional staff throughout the UK with our Head Office in Burton upon Trent, subsidiary offices in Yorkshire and Wiltshire, along with field staff working throughout the UK. In this way we can offer a national coverage to large national based clients.

Our mission is to provide competent health, safety & environmental advice to our clients. We focus primarily on construction, project management and property management sectors.

We provide an extensive range of training including CITB accredited training courses as well as inhouse courses.

Health & Safety Services

At Hurst Setter we provide a range of services that covers the entire spectrum of health and safety provision. Our services include:

- Site Audits & Site Inspections.
- Retainer Service & Assistance with SSIP Accreditation, CHAS, SMAS etc.
- Support with H&S Documentation, Risk Assessments, Policy & Procedure.
- H&S Management Systems.
- Training Courses including CITB, First Aid, Mental Health, and In-House Training Courses, including remote courses during COVID 19.
- Environmental Services, Advice & Support.
- CDM 2015 Services, Advice & Support.
- Other Services Upon Request.

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The HSE & SHP website is gratefully acknowledged as a primary sources for information

Occupational Lung Disease

Do you know the risks, and could you recognise the symptoms of lung disease?

Last year, around 12,000 people in the UK died from lung diseases estimated to be linked to past exposure at work. If you are an employer, you have a legal duty to protect workers' respiratory health. Breathing in certain dust, gases, vapours, and fumes at work can cause life-changing lung disease. Ensure you have effective measures in place to control exposure in your workplace.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Prolonged exposure to dust has been linked to several types of cancer. Workers in different trades face increased risks of specific illnesses.

TRADES

- 1 CONSTRUCTION
- 2 TIMBER
- 3 BRICK MASON
- 4 CONCRETE FINISHER
- 5 CARPENTER
- 6 PLASTERER
- 7 ROOFER
- 8 LABORER
- 9 ELECTRICIAN
- 10 PLUMBER
- 11 PAINTER
- 12 PIPEFITTER
- 13 STEEL ERECTOR

Labels on the silhouette: NASAL, ESOPHAGUS, LUNG, APLASTIC ANEMIA, KIDNEY, STOMACH, BLOOD/BLOOD-FORMING ORGANS, BONE.

Contractor fined £20k for silica dust exposure

Lancashire-based Playscape Design, a landscaping contractor specialising in playground construction, was prosecuted by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) after failing to provide employees with adequate control measures to prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS).

Greater Manchester magistrates heard how, on 23rd March 2018, the HSE carried out an unannounced inspection of a site at Newbank Garden Centre in Radcliffe and found two employees of Playscape Design using a power tool to cut flagstones without any respiratory protective equipment.



The HSE inspector served a prohibition notice to stop work and then served an improvement notice, requiring the company to provide adequate control from exposure to RCS.

But the company failed to provide evidence of compliance within the deadline and a second, similar job was completed at the same site with no adequate control measures in place.

Playscape Design Limited of Ball Grove Drive, Colne, Lancashire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 7(1) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and also admitted not complying with an

improvement notice, which is an offence under Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,000.

HSE inspector Rebecca Hamer said after the hearing: “The working conditions we encountered were putting the health of the employees at risk due to exposure to RCS, which is released when silica-containing materials are cut with a powered tool. Exposure to respirable crystalline silica can cause life-threatening diseases including silicosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), which can lead to impaired lung function, lung cancer and death. This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards.”



Lung Disease Basics

Work-related lung diseases are those diseases affecting the lungs and caused by or made worse by work.

Risks at work

Thousands of people die from work-related lung diseases every year, in many cases due to exposures that took place many years before. Breathing in certain dusts, gases, fumes and vapours in the workplace can cause serious, long-term lung damage. Diseases like, asbestosis, silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

What is silica?

Silica is a natural substance found in most rocks, and clay and in products such as bricks and concrete. Silica is also used as filler in some plastics. In the workplace these materials create dust when they are cut, sanded, carved etc.

Some of this dust may be fine enough to breathe deeply into your lungs and cause harm to your health. The fine dust is called respirable crystalline silica (RCS) and is too fine to see with normal lighting. The quantity of silica contained in stone and other materials varies considerably between different types of stone.

Approximate crystalline silica content of materials:

- Sandstone 70–90%
- Concrete, mortar 25–70%
- Tile 30–45% Granite 20–45%, typically 30%
- Slate 20–40%
- Brick Up to 30%
- Limestone 2%
- Marble 2%
- Slate mining and slate processing.
- Potteries, ceramics, ceramic glaze manufacture, brick and tile manufacture.
- Foundries.
- Refractory production and cutting.
- Concrete product manufacture.
- Monumental and architectural masonry manufacture, stone fireplace and kitchen worktop manufacture.
- Grit and abrasive blasting, particularly on sandstone.

Occupational exposure to RCS can occur in many industries, including:

- Construction and demolition processes – concrete, stone, brick, mortar.
- Quarrying.

(COPD), asthma, emphysema and even lung cancer, all cause severe, often incurable, health problems that can ruin lives.

Symptoms

Difficulties in breathing and coughing, often painful, are just two of the symptoms that sufferers with lung diseases may have to deal with every day.

Certain activities create dust containing RCS, such as:

- Grinding, drilling, cutting, sanding, chiselling, blasting.
- Polishing, conveying.
- Fetting.
- Mixing and handling, shovelling dry material.
- Rock drilling/breaking/crushing/screening.

In workplaces, the following can happen:

- Leaks or spillages cause a build-up of dust

How can RCS harm your health:

By breathing in RCS, you could develop the following lung diseases:

Silicosis: Silicosis makes breathing more difficult and increases the risk of lung infections. Silicosis usually follows exposure to RCS over many years, but extremely high exposures can lead rapidly to ill health.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD): COPD is a group of lung diseases, including bronchitis and emphysema, resulting in severe breathlessness, prolonged coughing and chronic disability. It may be caused by breathing in any fine dusts, including RCS. It can be very disabling and is a leading cause of death. Cigarette smoking can make it worse.

Lung cancer: Heavy and prolonged exposure to RCS can cause lung cancer. When someone already has silicosis, there is an increased risk of lung cancer.

The health risks from RCS are insignificant when exposure to dust is adequately controlled – you do not need to become ill through work activities.

What should your employer do to protect you:

- Employers must comply with The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended) and need to:
- Assess the risks to your health – this is called a ‘risk assessment’.
- Keep a written record of the risk assessment if they employ more than five people.
- Tell you anything significant about the risk assessment.

containing RCS.

- Dust containing RCS is not cleaned up safely, e.g. by dry sweeping rather than wet cleaning (see below).
- Clothing and surfaces are contaminated with dust containing RCS.
- Accumulated dust containing RCS is ‘raised’ from the ground or other surfaces by moving vehicles and people.
- Fine dusts remain in the air from work activities.



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- Consider where practicable substituting material with a lower RCS content.
- Where necessary, provide you with personal protective equipment.
- Maintain all equipment used as control measures in good working order.
- Instruct and train you to use equipment properly and tell you about health risks.
- Monitor to ensure that controls are effective and that the WEL for RCS is not exceeded, (this may include measurement of the dust levels in your work area).
- Where appropriate arrange health surveillance.

Prevent or control exposures to RCS by:

Following good occupational hygiene practice to achieve adequate control of exposure – more advice can be found in HSE's COSHH essentials. For RCS, control measures must be effective in keeping exposure below the Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) (0.1 mg/m³ respirable dust, averaged over 8 hours).

What should you do?

- Your employer must tell you about the risks from RCS, and how to avoid them. Make sure you understand what you have to do and do it. You should:
- Ask if the material you are using, or dust from the work you are doing, contains silica.
- Ask how the job should be done safely, without creating risks to your health.
- Follow all safe working procedures, including cleaning procedure.
- Use controls such as dust extraction as you were trained to do.
- Wear protective clothing properly.

If you have to wear a respirator, make sure that:

- You are wearing the right type of respirator for the job.
- You have a face-fit test for a tight-fitting respirator, to ensure it fits properly – you need

to be clean shaven for this tight fit type of respirator to work effectively.

- You have been trained to use, check and clean the respirator.
- The filters or disposable respirators are changed regularly.
- The equipment is stored in a clean, dust-free place.
- You tell your supervisor or employer if you find any defects, or your respirator does not fit, is dirty or its filter is old – your employer must put it right.

Do not:

- Dry sweep – use vacuum or wet cleaning.
- Use compressed air for removing dust from clothing.

If the controls to protect you from dust exposure include dust extraction (local exhaust ventilation (LEV)) or other engineering control equipment, you should ask yourself the following questions:

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- Were you involved in the design and selection of control equipment – the way you work may need to change to maximise the protection you get?
- Are the proposed changes workable – if they are not you could suggest alternatives; the way you work may need to change to maximise the protection you get?
- Have you been trained in how the control equipment works – you need to know how to use it effectively, your employer, the equipment supplier or some other competent person should do this?
- Can you tell if the control equipment is not working effectively – you should be trained to recognise the signs, e.g. dust extraction equipment should have an airflow indicator to show that it is working properly?
- Is the control equipment easy to use properly – if it forces you to work in an awkward way or prevents you doing the task properly tell your employer and suggest improvements?



Your employer may also need to arrange for you to be placed under health surveillance. This may include:

- Health and working history questionnaires.
- Lung function tests.
- Chest X-rays (these will only be undertaken if the doctor feels they are necessary).

Decisions on the appropriate form of health surveillance may require the advice of an occupational health professional. The precise form of health surveillance will depend on the particular circumstances of exposure (level, frequency and duration) identified by the risk assessment.

You should co-operate with your employer or works doctor/nurse if health surveillance is required. You are not entitled to see someone else's personal medical records and your employer is not entitled to see yours.