

Safe Dust Prevention

Dust is a common by-product of many construction tasks. Not only is it a nuisance, but can damage your health over time. Unfortunately there is no full-proof method of eliminating dust on construction sites, but there are ways to reduce dust levels.

What are hazards associated with dust exposure?

Hazards vary depending on what the dust comes from, the ventilation in the area, and the individual being exposed to the dust. Here are a few potential hazards associated with dust exposure:

- Silica containing dusts can lead to silicosis, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. If you're doing work where there is a potential for silica exposure, reference Table 1 for controls.
- Airborne dust can create eye irritation for employees working in an area with limited ventilation.
- Short-term exposure to dust can cause difficulty breathing for employees' with compromised pulmonary functions due to conditions like asthma.
- Long-term exposure to dust can vary depending on what the dust contains. Dust can contain a variety of chemicals due to paint, sealants, wood-coating, and other things used in the construction process. It is best practice to consider all dust to be hazardous and to avoid extreme exposure.

How can I mitigate dust?

There are several ways to mitigate dust:

- Increase ventilation in the area. Consider opening windows and doors and installing fans to create air circulation, removing dust from the work area.
- Use tools with HEPA vacuum attachments. Even if there is no exposure to silica, this can mitigate the creation of other dusts that are less hazardous.
- Wear a dust mask.
- Consider bringing an air-purifier onsite. These contain filters to trap dust particles and can greatly decrease the amount of dust in the air.
- Consider using a dust-control sweeping compound. These products are placed on the ground and absorb dust. The compound and dust on the ground can be swept without spreading the dust into the air.



Important—If the dust is created from concrete, brick, mortar, or any other silica-creating substance, reference Table 1 and take the correct preventative measures.