

# Construction dust

## What you need to know as a busy builder

**Do you think of construction dust as just a nuisance? It is in fact a serious risk to your health.**

**These are essential health and safety tips you should follow, even if you don't directly employ the people working on your site.**

- Regularly breathing even small amounts of dust over a long time can cause serious lung diseases including cancer.
- You are most at risk if you regularly do common jobs like:
  - using a cut-off saw on concrete products like kerbs, slabs, paving or roof tiles;
  - grinding concrete;
  - cutting and sanding wood products;
  - dry sweeping inside;
  - abrasive pressure blasting;
  - soft stripping/internal demolition work.
- You can take simple steps to stop this dust that will meet the law:
  - 1 Plan your work – work in a different way, limit the amount you cut or use non-powered equipment like block splitters;
  - 2 Stop the dust getting into the air. Wet cutting and on-tool extraction are both effective;
  - 3 Use the right mask.

### Remember

Construction workers have a high risk of developing lung diseases because many common tasks can create high dust levels. Over 500 construction workers are believed to die from exposure to silica dust every year. The amounts needed to cause this damage are not large. The largest amount of silica someone should be breathing in daily after using the right controls is shown below next to the penny.



See overleaf for examples of good practice ...

### Fee for Intervention

HSE now recovers the costs of time spent dealing with material breaches of health and safety law. This is known as Fee for Intervention (FFI). FFI generally applies when an inspector finds something wrong that they believe is serious enough for them to write to you about. A fee is charged for the time spent by the inspector in sorting it out. Following the simple guidance on this sheet may help you to avoid having to pay a fee.

**1. Plan your work –**

Don't cut if you don't need to. Put channels at the natural edges of flags. Cutting flags to fit is unnecessary and takes longer. Can you use low-energy devices like block splitters? They are just as effective as cut-off saws but create much less dust.



**2. Stop dust getting into the air –**

Water damps down the dust cloud. On-tool extraction removes the dust as you create it. Both are effective if correctly used.



**3. Use the right mask –**

Make sure your mask has the right level of protection and it fits your face. You need to be clean shaven and wear it correctly or else a mask may give you little protection.



© Crown copyright If you wish to reuse this information visit [www.hse.gov.uk/copyright.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/copyright.htm) for details. First published 09/14

The Working Well Together campaign aims to improve health and safety in the construction industry, particularly in small and micro businesses. For more information visit [www.wwt.uk.com](http://www.wwt.uk.com)



**This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.**