



Case study: No Time to Lose campaign: silica phase

Summary

The Silica phase of the **No Time to Lose** campaign was launched in March 2016 at The Shard in London, where IOSH hosted a roundtable discussion to identify how industry leaders across sector can work together to reduce the number of people falling ill through exposure to silica dust at work.

The talks made clear that great work is being carried out by responsible organisations across the globe to minimise the risks associated with silica dust. It remains the case, however, that millions of working people are still exposed to silica dust each year, and there needs to be a greater level of awareness and understanding of its dangers.

The leaders involved in the roundtable discussion have agreed a new cross-industry agreement which aims to achieve three principal objectives:

- To work together to reduce exposure to RCS through effective monitoring and management of dust.
- To increase awareness and understanding of the potential health risks associated with exposure to RCS in order to change attitudes and behaviours
- To share good practice on the management of RCS across industry sectors

The group has agreed to take action to tackle these objectives and will meet again in November 2017 to review progress.

Problem statement

Research published by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in 2012 found that every year in Britain around 900 people get lung cancer after breathing in silica dust at work. This type of dust is estimated to be the second biggest work-related cancer killer, causing the deaths of around 800 people annually.

In the same year, IOSH and the Construction Dust Partnership commissioned the 'Construction dust – an industry survey' to find out how the construction industry views and manages dust in general (not just silica dust).

The survey was sent to IOSH Construction Group members. In total 618 people (mainly from the UK) took part in the survey.

Many of its findings paint a fairly negative picture. They reveal:

- a lack of priority given to dust control by companies
- poor awareness of the risks among workers
- little attempt to 'design out' dust risks
- a poor understanding and use of on-tool extraction
- an over-reliance on RPE as the main form of control
- a lack of awareness about face-fit testing
- inadequate management arrangements to control dust
- poor worker compliance with the arrangements that are in place
- lack of worker consultation.

The picture is not all negative, as there was also found to be:

- an improving picture of control through the use of water suppression
- better compliance among those who are more informed about the risks and the controls needed.

The **No Time to Lose** campaign, launched by IOSH in 2014, aims to raise awareness of occupational cancer and help businesses take action.

The campaign is working to:

- raise awareness of a significant health issue facing workers
- suggest some solutions to tackle the problem
- offer free practical, original materials to businesses to help them deliver effective prevention programmes.

No Time to Lose has already launched free resources on diesel engine exhaust emissions and solar radiation. The third phase was silica dust.

In November and December 2015, IOSH operated a 'Silica dust – virtual focus group'. It sought to capture the views on silica dust exposure of a small selection of professionals working in the construction, rail, public services and mineral product sectors.

The focus group highlighted that the top five barriers to effective silica exposure control are:



- Lack of understanding or awareness of the significance of silica dust as a hazard
- Resistance from employees to use controls
- Ineffective implementation of control measures in practice, despite the existence of safe work systems and equipment place
- Not prioritised as a significant hazard by employers
- Lack of training in using controls effectively

The participants also stated that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the dangers of exposure to silica dust across industry.

Solution / what you did

IOSH also launched a range of free practical materials for wide audiences, such as factsheets, leaflets, posters and presentations, to help businesses raise awareness of silica dust exposure at work.

The Institution worked with BOHS and HSE to develop a tripartite presentation entitled 'Working together to beat occupational cancer – spotlight on silica'. The aim of the presentation was to equip businesses and safety and health professionals with the knowledge on how to tackle the issues around silica dust exposure and how they can be managed.



Figure 1: Cross Industry participants

Key challenges faced

The key challenge was to raise awareness of the health risks associated with exposure to silica dust at work and to encourage businesses around the world to take action by developing strategies to control exposure.

Outcomes and benefits

Through the 'Tackling respirable crystalline silica together: a cross-industry commitment', silica dust is recognised as a health hazard across industry and globally.

Also, businesses, employees, and OSH professionals around the world can access free No Time to Lose silica dust resources to learn to how manage exposure at work.

Measures of success

- The No Time to Lose silica dust resources have been downloaded more than 17,000 times to help raise awareness in the workplace.
- No Time to Lose campaign supporters such as the Society of Safety Engineers Ljubljana and the Center for Safety and Health at Work in Bulgaria have translated the silica dust resources into Slovenian and Bulgarian to highlight the issue in their countries.
- IOSH has worked with companies such as Network Rail, BAM Nuttall and Norse to dual brand the materials to help reach employees in their business.
- The IOSH, BOHS and HSE 'Working together to beat occupational cancer – spotlight on silica' presentation has been delivered at 15 events around the UK. IOSH has also presented the silica phase of No Time to Lose in the Middle East, Hong Kong, Singapore, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Croatia and Amsterdam. At these event, IOSH has distributed over 3,500 hardcopies of the No Time to Lose silica dust packs.
- IOSH has developed case studies to capture the good work companies are doing to manage silica dust at work. Businesses such as Network Rail, Wates Group, Crossrail, Wilmott Dixon and Berkeley Homes have shared their initiatives. Visibly dust levels improved
- Feedback from the workforce was positive

Lessons learnt

By working in partnership with leading organisations around the world to tackle silica dust, IOSH's No Time to Lose campaign has reached a wider audience.

As silica dust is a global issue, the eye-catching free No Time to Lose resources have been very popular worldwide. The fact that organisations in different countries have requested to have the materials translated in to different languages identifies the need to create effective communications to help raise awareness overseas.

IOSH also is working to increase awareness and understanding by developing promotions to reach SMEs.

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