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# TIPS FOR DUSTY JOBS

## Laborers



U.S. Department of Labor  
Mine Safety and Health Administration



### Clean Up Work and Dust

Maintenance, clean up and utility workers are exposed to more dust than the typical mine employee. Because so much rock dust has **silica** in it, you should take steps to protect yourself against a possible health hazard.

### Silicosis can be Deadly

Some dust is stopped by the body's natural defense system, but the *smallest* dusts can penetrate deep into the lungs. The harm from dust depends on what it's made of, what size it is, how much you breathe and how long you breathe it. If you're exposed to enough dust with silica, in time you can get a disease called **silicosis**.

Silicosis can be a disabling, *even fatal*, illness that can't be reversed once a person has it. Lung tissue becomes scarred and inflexible and breathing becomes harder and harder.

**If it's silica...It's not just dust.**

**Silicosis can't be reversed  
...but it can be *prevented*.**

## **Working Smart**

- **Don't dry sweep.** It puts dust in the air where you can breathe it.
- **Use water or a vacuum** system with a HEPA\* filter for cleaning.
- **Keep your work area clean.** Don't let dust build up.
- **Compressed air is NOT for cleaning**—clothes or equipment.
- **Report maintenance or system problems** right away.
- When possible, **maintain and clean** equipment when it's not operating.
- **Work upwind** of dust clouds or dusty areas when you can.
- Clean equipment and work areas **before and after** doing maintenance.

## **Respirators must be...**

- The **right type, worn right.**
- **Clean.**
- **Worn**—not hung on your neck or on top of your hat.
- The **right fit** to stop dust from getting into your lungs.
- A good fit. **Beards prevent it.**

\*high efficiency particulate air