NEPSI is the acronym for the European Network for Silica. It was formed by the Employee and Employer European sectoral associations having signed the Social Dialogue “Agreement on Workers’ Health Protection Through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silica and Products Containing it” on 25 April 2006.

The 17 signatories to date represent 14 industry sectors: the aggregates, cement, ceramics, foundry, glass fibre, special glass, container glass, flat glass, industrial minerals, mineral wool, natural stones, mining, mortar and pre-cast concrete, i.e. more than 2 million employees and a business exceeding € 250 billion. The Agreement remains open for further signatures.
**EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE**

Art. 139 of the EC Treaty provides the possibility for management and labour to enter into contractual relations and notably to sign European Social Dialogue Agreements. These can be given legal force through a decision by the Council and its transposition into the legislation, or else be implemented autonomously by the social partners according to national procedures and practices.

**RESPIRABLE CRYSSTALLINE SILICA**

Crystalline silica is an essential component of materials which have an abundance of uses in industry and are vital in many products and objects we use everyday. Although crystalline silica is ubiquitous in nature, the inhalation of fine dust containing a proportion of it may constitute a hazard that is limited to the workplace. Such an exposure can be controlled. The main industries concerned by possible exposures to respirable crystalline silica agreed on appropriate and credible measures for the improvement of working conditions.

**THE AGREEMENT** *(Official Journal of the European Union 2006/C 279/02)*

At the cornerstone of the autonomous European Social Dialogue Agreement on crystalline silica is a risk-assessment procedure based on the results of personal dust exposure monitoring, to help determine which measures and good practices to apply in order to improve workers protection. To this effect, a Good Practice Guide is annexed to the Agreement, which also provides recommendations on how to carry out dust monitoring, health surveillance and organise training. Signatories will regularly report on the application of the Agreement according to a specific procedure.
Risk assessment is carried out on site through a simple series of Questions/Answers, including the detection of exposure to respirable crystalline silica and the identification of existing control measures.

If necessary, exposure monitoring and implementation of additional control measures using specific Task sheets provided in the Good Practice Guide have to be performed.

Detailed Task Sheets constitute the main part of the Good Practice Guide, along with an introduction on crystalline silica and the risk assessment procedure. These provide a set of detailed technical recommendations to reduce exposure in the specific industrial settings encountered in each of the signatory industries.

Reporting will be carried out as from June 2008 and every two years from then on. Quantitative data on the status of application will be compiled in reporting formats to be filled in at site level and successively consolidated at company, national and European sector levels.

The reporting process will allow the bi-partite NEPSI Council made up of representatives of each signatory association to draw up a summary report to inform the EC, the Member States and the authorities responsible for health and safety on the application of the Agreement.
SIGNATORY EUROPEAN INDUSTRY SECTOR ASSOCIATIONS

APFE: European Glass Fibre Producers Association – www.cpivglass.be
BIBM: International Bureau for Precast Concrete – www.bibm.org
CAEF: The European Foundry Association – www.caef.org
CEEMET: Council of European Employers of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-Based Industries – www.ceemet.org
CEMBUREAU: The European Cement Association – www.cembureau.eu
CERAME-UNIE: The European Ceramics Industries – www.cerameunie.net
EMO: European Mortar Industry Organization – www.euromortar.com
EUROMINES: European Association of Mining Industries – www.euromines.org
EUROROC: European and International Federation of Natural Stones Industries – www.euroroc.org
ESGA: European Special Glass Association – www.cpivglass.be
EURIMA: European Insulation Manufacturers Association – www.eurima.org
FEVE: European Container Glass Federation – www.feve.org
GEPVP: European Association of Flat Glass Manufacturers – www.gepvp.org
IMA-Europe: European Industrial Minerals Association – www.ima-europe.eu
UEPG: European Aggregates Association – www.uepg.eu

SIGNATORY EUROPEAN TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS

EMCEF: European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers’ Federation – www.emcef.org
EMF: European Metalworkers’ Federation – www.emf-fem.org

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