



NOYAU EUROPEEN POUR LA SILICE
EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR SILICA
EUROPÄISCHES NETZWERK FÜR QUARZ



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.



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EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE

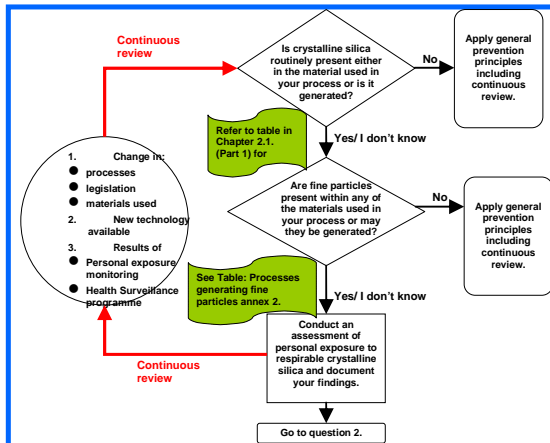
Art. 139 of the EC Treaty provides the possibility for management and labour to enter into contractual relations and notably to sign European Social Dialogue Agreements. These can be given legal force through a decision by the Council and its transposition into the legislation, or else be implemented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

RESPIRABLE CRYSTALLINE 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.

2.1.1

This guidance sheet is aimed at employers to help them comply with the requirements of workplace health and safety legislation, by controlling exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

Specifically, this sheet provides advice on dust control during cleaning operations in the workplace. Following the key points of this task sheet will help reduce exposure.

Depending on the specific circumstances of each case, it may not be necessary to apply all of the control measures identified in this sheet in order to minimize exposure to respirable crystalline silica. It is recommended to apply appropriate protection and prevention measures.

This document should also be made available to persons who may be exposed to respirable crystalline silica in the workplace, in order that they may make the best use of the control measures which are implemented.

This sheet forms part of the Good Practice Guide on silica dust prevention, which aimed specifically at the control of personal exposure to respirable crystalline silica dust in the workplace.



Cleaning

This activity relates to cleaning of surfaces in the workplace of substances which may contain a proportion of crystalline silica dust. Cleaning should be carried out in a suitable form, but may also be required in response to a spillage of a substance containing crystalline silica.

Access

- Practice access to the work area is authorized personnel only.

Design and equipment

Wet cleaning:

- Dust control can be achieved using wet cleaning methods, which prevent the dust from becoming airborne by trapping it in water.
- Wet cleaning methods may involve mopping, wet brushing or the use of water sprays or hoses.
- Where water sprays are used, ensure that water supplies are adequate and that they are maintained. Take extra precautions during cold weather to protect against freezing.
- When wetting bulk spillages of free, dry dusty material it is best to use a fine mist. The use of a jet of water will create dust to increase exposure.
- Where wet cleaning methods are used, electrical installations must be designed with protection against water ingress.
- The provision of appropriate drainage systems is essential when using water sprays and hoses.

Dry cleaning:

- Dust control can be achieved using dry cleaning methods, which involve vacuuming of the dry dust.
- Industrial vacuum cleaners may be portable units, equipped with high efficiency particulate filter (HEPA) filter or equivalent technology. Alternatively a building may be equipped with an integrated vacuum cleaning system, with or without wet collection leading to a central dust collection unit.
- Vacuum systems may need to be of an approved type.
- If vacuum cleaning systems will need to deal with large or bulk spillages of powdered material they should be especially designed to avoid overloading or blocking.
- Where wet cleaning or vacuum cleaning is not possible and only dry cleaning methods can be used, ensure that the workers wear appropriate personal protective equipment and ensure that measures are taken to prevent crystalline silica dust from spreading outside the working area.
- Vacuum cleaning systems are not generally suitable for cleaning up spillages of damp materials.



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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.



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SIGNATORY EUROPEAN INDUSTRY SECTOR ASSOCIATIONS

APFE: European Glass Fibre Producers Association – www.cpviglass.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.cpviglass.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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