Dust Hazards in Construction Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. There are three main types of construction dust: silica dust, non-silica dust and wood dust.
2. Dust can cause inflammation and scarring of the lungs (fibrosis), and some particular dusts cause severe lung diseases.
3. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 impose requirements that are legally binding. These include exposure levels for both total alienable dust and for respirable dust.
4. Exposure to dust should be eliminated wherever possible. If not possible, the risk should be assessed and appropriate control measures implemented.
5. The risk assessment, where there is no practicable alternative, should provide a “method statement” on how the reduction of exposure to dust to a safe level will be achieved.
6. Dust levels will need to be monitored to ensure that exposure is adequately controlled.
7. Operations such as cutting, grinding and sand-blasting can be major sources of airborne particles.

STATS

- Construction dust can seriously damage the health of construction workers and if exposed for longer times can eventually even kill them. About 22,000 to 52,000 persons per year are dying due to inhaling polluted air in USA alone – most of whom are construction workers. In Great Britain, over 500 construction workers are believed to die every year from lung cancer. America and Europe have enacted rules to mitigate the effects of dust.

- According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), about 2.3 million workers receive exposure to crystalline silica in the workplace. This number includes 2 million construction workers.
- The Construction Index editorial, that “81% of the 500,000 people who are exposed to silica dust at work, are employed in the construction industry.
- II’s estimated that in the USA, around 2.2 million workers are exposed, with 1.85 million of them in construction.
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) set in place industry standards for exposure to hazardous substances, including dust.
- An estimated 3,500 cancer deaths were attributed to the construction and demolition industry in 2013, according to Mike Slater, President of the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS)