Preventing Silicosis Fatality File

SAND BLASTER

A 39-year-old man was diagnosed with silicosis (progressive massive fibrosis) and tuberculosis after working 22 years as a sandblaster. He had noticed a gradual increase in shortness of breath, wheezing, and discomfort from minimal exertion. Tissue taken from his lungs showed extensive fibrosis.

The sandblaster was first diagnosed with silicosis in 2011 when a coworker had developed tuberculosis and the State health department had administered chest X-rays and skin testing to the entire crew. He was one of 20 workers who sandblasted welds during water tank construction to prepare the metal for painting. While sandblasting, he wore a charcoal filter respirator. During a 10- to 11-hour day, he spent 6 hours sandblasting.

Two brothers and three nephews who worked with him all tested positive for tuberculosis. A brother-in-law had also worked at the company for 20 years but had died from progressive silicosis.