

Silica Enforcement Initiative

MSHA is implementing a Silica Enforcement Initiative to protect Coal and Metal and Nonmetal (MNM) miners' health by limiting their exposures to respirable crystalline silica. This initiative has four components: inspections, sampling, compliance assistance, and miners' rights.

1. Inspections

Coal and MNM mines

MSHA will conduct spot inspections for silica at coal and MNM mines.

- At mines with repeated overexposures to silica.
- This will include, where warranted, inspections in accordance with Section 103(i) of the Mine Act.
- MSHA will require for overexposures over 100 micrograms per cubic meter (existing PEL):
 - For MNM mines, abatement within a period of time.
 - For overexposures not abated, MSHA will issue a 104(b) withdrawal order.
 - For coal mines, MSHA will encourage mine operators to change the dust control and mine ventilation plans and review plans/exposures after changes are made.

Coal mines

Review of Ventilation and Roof Control Plans

- MSHA District Managers will review ventilation and roof control plans for extended cuts (greater than 20 feet). District Managers may require mine operators to specify in these plans:
 - The number of miners working downwind of the continuous mining machine.
 - The number of extended cuts miners will work downwind.
- MSHA will take additional dust samples for miners who are overexposed. (See sampling)
- MSHA District Managers will review approved plans to determine if the plans are appropriate when MSHA's samples indicate silica overexposures.

2. Sampling

Coal and MNM mines

- MSHA will collect respirable dust samples from occupations known to have a high-risk of exposures to silica. This will include MNM and Coal miners involved in overburden removal and the construction of a shaft or slope.

Coal mines

Extended Cuts (Greater than 20 feet)

For mines with approved extended cut mining, MSHA may collect additional dust samples for:

- Miners working downwind of a continuous mining machine.
- The number of extended cuts miners will work downwind.

Developing Cross Cuts

Developing a crosscut is a period in the mining process when miners may be potentially at a significant risk of high exposures.

- MSHA samples these miners when possible.

3. Compliance Assistance

- MSHA will work with stakeholders including mine operators, industry, and labor.
- MSHA will share additional information through stakeholder calls and to MSHA grantees.

- All information will be posted on the Agency’s website.
- MSHA will distribute materials related to this initiative and provide compliance assistance through Educational Field and Small Mine Services staff.

4. Miners’ Voice

- MSHA will reinvigorate efforts to educate miners about their rights to make hazardous condition complaints and their protections against retaliation and discrimination.
- MSHA will ensure that miners are aware of their right to:
 - Accompany an MSHA inspector.
 - Obtain an immediate MSHA inspection if they believe safety or health hazards exists.
 - Identify hazardous conditions and refuse unsafe work without fear of retaliation and discrimination.
 - Additional information will be posted on the MSHA’s website.
 - Compliance assistance materials will be provided through the Educational Field and Small Mine Services staff.

[MSHA Assistant Secretary Chris Williamson Speech to United Mine Workers of America 56th Consecutive Constitutional Convention](#) | [Mine Safety and Health Administration \(MSHA\)](#)



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