

Kriss Worthington

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CONSENT CALENDAR

April 30, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Supporting Enforcement of Draft Proposed Rule to Reduce Exposure to

Life-Threatening Silica Dust by the Federal Occupational Safety and

Health Administration (OSHA)

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution supporting the enforcement of a draft proposed rule to reduce exposure to life-threatening silica dust and send a letter to the White House Office of Management and Budget.

BACKGROUND

Silica dust is a type of dust from silica (crystalline quartz) that causes breathing problems to workers in the fields of mining, stone cutting, quarrying (especially granite), blasting, road and building construction industries that manufacture abrasives, and farming. Breathing the dust causes silicosis, a severe disease that can scar the lungs.

Each year, more than 250 American workers die with silicosis. More than 1 million U.S. workers are exposed to crystalline silica. There is no cure for the disease, but it is 100 percent preventable if employers, workers and health professionals work together to reduce exposures.

Because chronic silicosis is slow to develop, signs and symptoms may not appear until years after exposure. According to OSHA, chronic silicosis, the most common form of the disease, may go undetected for years in the early stages; in fact, a chest X-ray may not reveal an abnormality until after 15 or 20 years of exposure. The body's ability to fight infections may be overwhelmed by silica dust in the lungs, making workers more susceptible to certain illnesses, such as tuberculosis. As silicosis progresses, you may exhibit one or more of the following symptoms:

- shortness of breath following - fatigue

physical - loss of appetite

Exertion - chest pains

- severe cough - fever

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None.

CONTACT PERSON:
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Attachment:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO.

SUPPORTING THE ENFORCEMENT OF A DRAFT PROPOSED RULE TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LIFE-THREATENING SILICA DUST

WHEREAS, OSHA enforces a permissible exposure limit, which is the maximum amount of airborne crystalline silica that an employee may be exposed to during an eight-hour work shift and has rules on hazard communication, safety and health programs in construction, and access to employee exposure and medical records; and

WHEREAS, MSHA enforces its own exposure limits, has rules requiring controls for drills, and requires air sampling in certain situations; and

WHEREAS, other relevant OSHA and MSHA regulations include: respiratory protection, posting of warning signs, housekeeping, recordkeeping or reporting of occupational illnesses, abrasive blasting, personal protective equipment, and training; and

WHEREAS, workers can act to prevent Silicosis by using engineering controls installed by employers to reduce silica dust levels, and make sure they are properly maintained; and

WHEREAS, they can minimize dust by following good work practices, such as removing dust with a water hose or vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate filter rather than blowing it clean with compressed air, or by wet sweeping instead of dry sweeping; and

WHEREAS, they can suggest their employer to substitute less hazardous materials than crystalline silica for abrasive blasting; and

WHEREAS, they should wear, maintain, and correctly use approved particulate respirators when engineering controls alone are not adequate to reduce exposures below permissible levels; and

WHEREAS they should participate in air monitoring, medical surveillance, and training programs offered by their employer or when required by law; and

WHEREAS, workers are allowed to ask for the results of air sampling done at their worksite if they are concerned about silica dust; and

WHEREAS, employers should make a commitment to prevent silicosis at their worksites and comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations on respirable crystalline silica. If employees are overexposed, reduce exposure levels through the use of engineering controls. While these controls are being installed, or if they are being repaired, provide appropriate respiratory protection; and

WHEREAS, employers should also perform air monitoring of worksites as needed, and when required by law, and take corrective action when silica levels are excessive.

Monitoring provides a basis for: selecting and ensuring the effectiveness of engineering controls, selecting proper respiratory protection, seeing if work practices to reduce dust levels are effective, determining if a medical surveillance program is necessary; and

WHEREAS, employers should install and maintain engineering controls to eliminate or reduce the amount of silica in the air and the build-up of dust on equipment and surfaces. Examples of controls include: exhaust ventilation and dust collection systems, water sprays, wet drilling, enclosed cabs, and drill platform skirts; and

WHEREAS, employers need to substitute less hazardous materials than crystalline silica for abrasive blasting, when possible. Try to use automatic blast cleaning machines or cabinets that allow operating the machines from outside using gloved armholes; and

WHEREAS, employers have to train workers about health effects, engineering controls and work practices that reduce dust, the importance of maintenance and good housekeeping, as well as on the proper type and fitting of respirators; and

WHEREAS, employers should establish a written respiratory protection program and provide medical examinations for employees who may be exposed to respirable crystalline silica, as recommended by NIOSH, and have X-rays read by a specialist in dust diseases; and

WHEREAS, they should report all cases of silicosis to state health departments and to MSHA, and record cases on OSHA logs, as required, and post warning signs to identify work areas where respirable silica is present.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Council supports the enforcement of a draft proposed rule by OSHA to reduce exposure to life-threatening silica dust and send a letter to the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Supporting Groups:

- "A Guide To Working Safely With Silica" by U.S. Department of Labor: If It's Silica. It's Not Just Dust
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- Mine Safety and Health Administration
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health