



# Weekly Safety Meetings

Safety Training for the Construction Industry

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Standard  
Subscription

COMPANY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Avoiding Silicosis

Silicosis is a disabling, irreversible, and often fatal lung disease caused by inhaling dust that has silica in it. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, each year, more than 250 American workers die from suffocation because their lungs are so scarred from silicosis that they can't take a good breath. Hundreds more are disabled by it. Although there is no cure for silicosis, the good news is that it is entirely preventable.

Silica is a real hazard. It damages your lungs in more or less the same way asbestos does. Whenever you inhale crystalline silica, your lung tissue reacts by forming nodules and scarring around the trapped silica particles. Silicosis is the disease that results when this scar tissue forms in the lungs and reduces the ability of your lungs to absorb the oxygen that's in the air. As the silicosis gets worse, and more scarring develops, breathing becomes difficult and the end result can be disability or death. Symptoms of silicosis can include shortness of breath while exercising, fever, bluish skin at ear lobes or lips, fatigue, loss of appetite, or any combination of these.

If you work with silica-containing products such as sand, quartz, and granite rock, or if you are involved in sandblasting, stonecutting, rock drilling, tunneling, or quarrying, you need to be aware of the hazards of crystalline silica. You are at risk of developing silicosis if:

1. You work around airborne silica,
2. The particles are small enough,
3. And you breathe in the silica.

**There are actions you can take that will limit your exposure to silica and prevent silicosis.**

The first thing you can do is, whenever possible, eliminate the silica hazard by using a different, safer material that doesn't contain silica. Of course, removing silica is not always possible. The next best thing is to control the dust with engineering controls. This means keeping the silica out of the air. Some controls include installing local exhaust ventilation, using water to wet down dust as it is being created (like wet cutting tile or brick), and using dust-collection systems on machines that generate dust.

The last option is to wear personal protective equipment like a respirator when necessary. Do not alter the respirator. If you have a beard or a mustache, it may prevent you from getting a good seal on your respirator. If your work requires a respirator, consider shaving your facial hair.

You can also follow safe work practices to reduce your silica intake. Know which tasks can lead to silica exposure. Practice good personal hygiene. Wash your hands and face before eating or drinking outside of the exposure area. Whenever possible, change into washable or disposable work clothes at the beginning of your shift, or shower and change into clean clothes before leaving the jobsite. Never eat, drink, smoke, or apply cosmetics in areas where silica dust is present.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**Smoking increases the damage from silicosis.**

**NOTES:**

SPECIAL TOPICS / EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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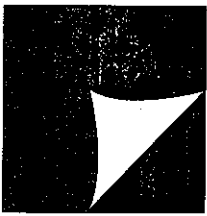


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## Tilt-Up Construction

Tilt-up construction presents several hazards and requires proper planning, safe execution, and the establishment of effective exclusion zones. After all, tilt-up construction involves lifting massive concrete wall panels that weigh several tons, a task that leaves no room for error. Working around cranes, which lift the concrete panels into place, also requires careful attention to safety. When tilt-up construction is underway, everyone on the site should have a clear understanding of safe tilt-up practices.

While the wall panels are being constructed on the floor, it's important to have the work area clearly planned and marked so that workers, tools, concrete trucks, and cranes do not create dangers for each other. Where possible, lay out work areas to limit the amount of backing the concrete delivery trucks need to do. The delivery chutes on concrete trucks can lop your finger right off; be very careful if you assemble, remove, or adjust delivery chutes.

Exclusion zones should be established and strongly enforced during the tilt-up process. Lifting cast-in-place concrete panels into position puts enormous stress on the panels. Nobody should be standing or walking under a panel in case it comes crashing down to the ground. Barricades only work as visual barriers and should not be used to limit access. Enforcing an exclusion zone means that nobody can be under the panel, so nobody gets hurt if it does fall.

All cranes used for tilt-up should have a copy of the annual inspection certificate in the operator's cab. A load chart

should be kept in the crane in a visible location. The operator must conduct daily and weekly crane inspections according to the manufacturer's requirements. Lifting devices and equipment should be inspected for defects and removed from service immediately if problems are found.

Braces are used to secure tilt-up walls until permanent connections are established. When connecting braces to panels:

- Watch out for pinch points.
- Use the right kind of ladder to access braces.
- If you are using a scissor lift or a boom lift, be sure to maintain proper stability and keep your body inside the rails of the basket.
- Be aware that something as simple as a little wind can make a straight-forward job extremely challenging and much more dangerous.

If your tasks include being the signal person, be sure you communicate clearly with the crane operators. Everyone involved needs to understand the signals being used. Whether you use hand signals or radios, be sure you use the right signals and that your directions are clear and easy to understand. Miscommunicating can cause a catastrophe.

As always, remain alert and look out for each other.

### SAFETY REMINDER

**Look around. If you wouldn't want to be where you are if a panel fell, then don't be there now!**

### NOTES:

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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## Working With Forklift Trucks

Forklifts are essential pieces of equipment on construction sites. With these machines, we are able to easily move heavy materials and small equipment around the jobsite. Forklifts are used to push, pull, lift, carry, and stack materials. They save us a lot of time and effort; preventing us from struggling with moving large or heavy objects. As useful as they are, forklifts can present some hazards, and are responsible for about 100 deaths and 20,000 injuries every year. That doesn't mean that forklifts have to be dangerous. We just need to remember that both operators and those workers around the forklift are responsible for working safely.

OSHA requires forklift operators to be over 18 and trained in the safe operation of the specific kind of lift he or she is using. Operators may need re-training if they are involved in an accident, a near miss, or if they are assigned to a different type of lift. Never attempt to operate a forklift unless you are qualified to do so. Before you operate your forklift, spend a few minutes doing a safety check. Are the tires full? Do the back-up alarm, lights, and horn work? Look for hydraulic leaks, test the brakes, and check the fuel and oil levels. Extend the forks, and raise and lower the mast to determine whether the controls are operating as they should. Are you familiar with the manufacturer's load restrictions and other safety recommendations? Remember, only use the forklift to do the work it is designed to do.

If you're the operator, you must operate the equipment safely. Be observant of your surroundings. Be aware of slopes and blind corners. Watch for things that could cause

the lift to tip—changes in elevation, holes, curbs, drop-offs and mud. Always keep a sharp eye out for any person working in the area. This is especially important when you are going backwards.

Workers have a responsibility to stay clear of any lift that is in use. To avoid becoming a victim of a forklift accident, always be aware of forklifts operating around you. Give forklifts plenty of room to maneuver. Prevent crushed-by injuries—whether the lift is moving or not, never stand near the lift or the load; and don't try to slip past or between to save time or steps. Never expect or assume that a forklift operator can see you. Operators have limited lines of sight because of the loads they're carrying. If you must work around a moving forklift, be sure to establish eye contact with the operator and get a clear sign that he or she sees you. Use hand signals when necessary. Never work near or under lifted loads. Listen for back-up alarms and look carefully before you walk near a forklift.

Never use a forklift to lift people unless they are in an approved manbasket or personnel basket and they are wearing appropriate fall protection gear. Standing on an elevated pallet is never acceptable!

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**Turn off your lift before fueling. Let the engine cool before adding diesel fuel or gasoline. Keep a fire extinguisher handy and NEVER smoke during fueling.**

**NOTES:**

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:  
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## Motor Vehicle Safety

Anytime you operate a motor vehicle, whether on or off the job, you have a responsibility to operate it safely. There are many factors you need to consider in order to operate a vehicle safely. Some of these include the vehicle's condition, your state of mind, vehicle maintenance, and buckling up.

**Inspect:** Before you get into your vehicle, take a few moments to inspect it. Check the windshield for cracks. Clean your windows and windshield if they seem too grimy to see through. Check your headlights, parking lights, brake lights, and turn signals. Make sure all your mirrors are adjusted properly. Once you're inside the vehicle, honk the horn to make sure it works. Check your fuel gauge to make sure you have enough fuel to get where you're going.

**State of mind—Check in:** Before you start the engine, do a safety check on your mind. Your mental and emotional states can affect your driving, so make sure you are sober, clear-headed, and calm. Drunk driving is one of America's most often-committed and deadliest crimes. If you are planning to drink alcohol with friends, designate a sober driver before you go out, and give that person the keys. If you didn't plan ahead and you are impaired, call a cab, ride the bus, or call a friend to get you home safely.

**State of mind—Aggressive driving:** This can include taking out your frustrations on other drivers, tailgating, whipping in and out of lanes to get ahead of others, entering intersections at yellow lights, and speeding. To avoid aggressive driving,

allow extra time for your commute. Take an alternate route that may be longer but that is less congested. Listen to relaxing music in your vehicle. If you start to get frustrated when you're running late, just decide to be late. It's better to be late than dead—or jailed for manslaughter. If you really can't stand the thought of getting behind the wheel, take the bus or find another way to get to your destination.

**Maintain:** Keep your vehicle well maintained. Check your tires regularly to make sure they are properly inflated and have enough tread. Newer testing says to put a quarter, not a penny, in the tread groove with Washington's head toward the axel. If you can see the top of George's head you need to think about replacing the rubber. You should also check the fluid levels in your engine. Running low on oil or other fluids can damage your vehicle's engine. Make sure you have working windshield wipers. You don't want to wait till you get caught in a rainstorm to realize your wipers don't work.

**Strap up:** Wearing your seat belt is the most effective thing you can do to protect yourself in a crash. Seat belts are the best defense against aggressive, distracted, or drunk drivers.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**Avoid distractions while driving. Don't try to text, check e-mail, or talk on the phone while driving. Turn off ringers and keep your phone out of reach until you get to your destination.**

**NOTES:**

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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