



Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

Division of Occupational Safety and Health

Information for medical providers on the Respirable Crystalline Silica rules proposed by the Department of Labor and Industries

Exposure to small particles of silica—known as respirable crystalline silica—causes multiple diseases that can lead to disability and death, including silicosis, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease. Silica also increases the risk that individuals with latent tuberculosis (TB) infections will develop active TB disease. Silica exposure occurs in many workplaces—OSHA estimates that about 2.3 million US employees are exposed to silica particles, which are created when cutting, sawing, grinding, drilling, and crushing stone, rock, concrete, brick, block, and mortar.

The Department of Labor and Industries is conducting rulemaking to protect workers in Washington State who are exposed to respirable crystalline silica from these health hazards, and to ensure that Washington's occupational safety and health rules are at least as protective as those created by Federal OSHA, which recently created new requirements pertaining to respirable crystalline silica.

Medical Surveillance

The proposal includes a requirement that employers of certain workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica make available initial (baseline) and periodic medical examinations. L&I proposes that compliance with these new surveillance requirements begin by October 1, 2018 for workers with occupational exposure in construction work, the largest group of employees covered by the proposed rules. (Full information about proposed compliance dates is available at

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/LawRule/WhatsNew/Proposed/default.asp?RuleID=429>)

Examination elements include:

- History taking
- Physical examination
- Chest x-ray with B-read
- Pulmonary function testing administered by a spirometry technician with a current certificate from a NIOSH-approved spirometry course
- Screening/testing for latent tuberculosis infection
- Any other test deemed appropriate by the PLHCP

Additional Proposed Rule Requirements

On October 31, 2017 the department filed the proposed rules. In addition to adding medical surveillance requirements, proposed changes include:

- lowering the permissible exposure limit to 50 micrograms of respirable crystalline silica per cubic meter of air
- setting an action level of 25 micrograms of respirable crystalline silica per cubic meter of air, calculated as an eight-hour time-weighted average
- setting new requirements for exposure assessment and control methods

Guidance for Effective Medical Implementation

The Department's proposal includes two medical resources to aid physicians and other licensed health care professionals (PLHCPs) regarding compliance with the medical surveillance provisions of the proposed rules. The first, a medical surveillance guideline, is included in Appendix B. The second, a Tuberculosis Screening Tool designed as an adjunct to the clinical evaluation, is included in Appendix C. Both resources are attached. Final decisions about medical recommendations rest with the PLHCP.

Proposed Rules Comment Period

The Department is accepting written public comment on this rulemaking—including the TB Screening Tool and other medical surveillance guidance—from **December 15** until **December 22, 2017**. You may submit written comments by the December 22nd deadline to:

Josefina Magana
PO Box 44620
Olympia, WA 98504-4620
Fax: 360-902-5619
josefina.magana@lni.wa.gov

You may also comment in person regarding the medical guidance and any other elements of this rulemaking at the hearing being held on **December 15, 2017** at 9:00 am at:

The Department of Labor and Industries
Room S119
7273 Linderson Way Southwest
Tumwater, WA 98501

Prior to promulgating final rules (intended date of adoption is January 23, 2018), the department will consider comments received by these deadlines.

Full information about the rulemaking activity, including additional timeline information, is available at <http://www.lni.wa.gov/LawRule/WhatsNew/Proposed/default.asp?RuleID=429>

If you have any questions about this rulemaking, please contact Larry Gore by phone at 360-902-5514, or by email at gore235@lni.wa.gov.

Attachments: Appendices B and C