

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Smash repair industry (including spray painters) – Dust

Dust from such things as sanding is a common occurrence in the smash repair industry. The following outlines ways to reduce the clean-up time and inhalation of dust. It is important to reduce the amount of dust in the workplace, as it can contain crystalline silica, which can lead to lung disease.

Reducing the escape of dust

- use wet sanding processes where practical
- using tools that have built-in extraction or connect to dust extraction systems.

Reducing dust in the workplace

- use a 'local extraction' ventilation system – i.e. a mechanical dust extraction system that extracts dust from a specific part of the work area, filters out the dust and has clean make-up air
- have enough general ventilation (fresh air ducted into the workplace or natural ventilation through doors and windows to dilute the amount of dust in the air)
- create a separate work area with walls or other dust proof barriers where tasks that generate dust are done
- how to keep the workplace clean:
 - in the panel shop, using a vacuum cleaner rather than a broom reduces dust in the air. If hazardous dusts such as those containing crystalline silica are present, a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter would be more appropriate.
 - in the spray painting area, wet down the paint dust before sweeping it up.

There can still be active isocyanate particles that can get into the air if swept up dry. Paint dust should not be cleaned up with a dry vacuum cleaner as it can catch on fire.

- don't use compressed air to blow dust or blow contaminant from clothes.

Reducing dust inhalation

- use 'respiratory protective equipment' – i.e. a respirator. Respirators used must meet AS 1716 (it will have an Australian Standards mark on the package). For many dusts in panel beating, a 'P1' type respirator is appropriate². The types of respiratory protective equipment are:
 - disposable respirators³
 - half face and full face respirators (rubber mask with replaceable filters)³
 - air supplied breathing apparatus
- air supplied breathing apparatus, then half/full face respirators, provide better protection from inhaling dust and are more cost efficient in the long term.

Important: Crystalline Silica

Dust from some body fillers and polishes can contain crystalline silica. If crystalline silica is breathed into the lungs, it can cause irreversible lung disease. If body fillers or polishes containing crystalline silica (check on the product's label or Material Safety Data Sheet to find out this information), see if you can replace the product with a product not containing crystalline silica. If this is not possible, inhalation of the dust will have to be reduced through a combination of the ways described above.

Workers breathing in dust containing crystalline silica will need to have regular health check-ups (referred to as 'health surveillance'), which have to be carried out by a designated doctor. For further information, refer to the *Hazardous Substances Code of Practice* and guidance material on the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website.

For more information on dust and general workplace health and safety issues call 1300 369 915 or visit www.deir.qld.gov.au

Important information:

- ¹ People using personal protective equipment, such as respirators, have to be trained in how to use and maintain the equipment properly to ensure its' effectiveness.
- ² For more hazardous dusts, such as those containing crystalline silica, disposable and 'P1' respirators may not be enough - a better respirator ('P2', half/full face or air supplied) and use of extraction ventilation would be more appropriate.
- ³ People using half/full face and disposable respirators have to be cleanly shaven for the respirator to have a good seal on the face, for it to be effective.

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