

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH

June 3, 2025

AND HILDA L. SOLIS

Proclaim June 2025 as Silicosis Awareness Month

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has reported 322 cases of silicosis, 31 lung transplants and 15 deaths in the state, as of May 2025, and counting, with 180 cases (over 55%) reported in Los Angeles County, and the vast majority of those in the San Fernando Valley. Silicosis is an occupationally acquired preventable lung disease caused by inhalation of respirable crystalline silica (RCS). Silica is a mineral found in nature and in materials such as sand, stone, concrete, artificial stone, and more. Cutting, grinding, chipping, sanding, drilling, finishing, or polishing of these products can release dangerous levels of silica dust into the air that workers, primarily in stone fabrication and construction occupations, can become exposed to.

Workers presenting with symptoms of silicosis are primarily Latino immigrant men between 40-49 years old with an average of 15-year work tenure cutting and fabricating stone. Silicosis typically takes 10-30 years to develop, although it can develop sooner if a person has high exposure to silica dust. Workplace exposure to crystalline silica dust

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causes lung inflammation, stiffening, and scarring, which can lead to severe lung disease and difficulty breathing. There is no cure besides a lung transplant, which may only extend survival on average for five years post-transplant. Additional health effects of silica dust exposure include other pulmonary diseases; chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), malignancies, infections like Tuberculosis and non-tuberculous mycobacterium, autoimmune diseases, and renal disease. City, County, State and academic partners have taken steps to address this emerging and preventable disease.

The Board approved the "Silicosis Prevention Education" motion, on December 19, 2023, in which the Board invested \$500,000 from Tobacco Settlement funds to continue silicosis prevention and intervention outreach and education throughout Los Angeles County, led by the Department of Public Health (DPH) with support from community-based organizations. In addition to outreach and engagement, the Department of Economic Opportunity-Office of Small Business has convened stakeholders to coordinate outreach and education strategies to stone fabrication businesses and provide resources. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) developed support materials and resources for individuals and families diagnosed with silicosis. Lastly, the Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations branch (CEO-LAIR) has continued to advocate in support of silicosis prevention and intervention proposals at the state and federal levels.

The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) approved the emergency temporary standards (ETS) on respirable crystalline silica (RCS), which went into effect on December 29, 2023, and were made permanent on December 19, 2024. ETS implemented stricter safety standards and protocols to prevent exposure to

silica dust in stone fabrication shops, accompanied by a public awareness and education campaign.

Additionally, there have been state legislative efforts. On March 2024, Assemblywoman Luz Rivas introduced Assembly Bill (AB) 3043, "The Silicosis Prevention Act" to protect the stone fabrication industry from the harmful effects of silica. AB 3043 was withdrawn due to pushback, but on December 2, 2024, Senator Caroline Menjivar introduced Senate Bill (SB) 20, the Silicosis Training, Outreach and Prevention (STOP) Act. The bill would adopt a training program on best practices related to fabrication activities; develop a certification process for fabrication shops; begin issuing three-year certificates to fabrication shops that meet CDPH requirements; and create and maintain a public database and tracking system that shows which fabrication shops are in compliance with California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) safety standards and their certification status.

Los Angeles City Councilmembers Imelda Padilla, Bob Blumenfield, and Monica Rodriguez co-introduced a set of motions targeting silicosis, on April 3, 2024. The motions created a mandatory wastewater permit for stone fabrication businesses, inclusion of language specifying the risks of using silica products in Building and Safety construction permits, and a public awareness campaign that has been developed in collaboration with CDPH and LA County DPH.

There have been considerable efforts at the state and local levels to ensure prevention and intervention initiatives to adequately tackle silicosis. Collaborative efforts among all levels of government, academia, community, industry, and stakeholders must continue, to ensure that employers and employees in the stone fabrication industry, and

community are educated on current regulations, how to prevent silicosis, and how to access needed resources. Workers need to be aware of the proper use of PPE, and their right to receive screening and seek medical treatment. Stone fabrication shop owners must not only be educated on regulatory standards, but they also need support to comply. Therefore, collaborative efforts to raise awareness of silicosis and RCS prevention strategies must continue.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Proclaim June 2025 as Silicosis Awareness month throughout Los Angeles County.
- 2) Direct the LA County Department of Public Health (DPH) in collaboration with the LA County Department of Health Services (DHS), the LA County Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), and the Department of Mental Health (DMH), pursuant to resources being available, to continue partnering with the California Department of Public Health Occupational Health Branch (CDPH-OHB), the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), the City of Los Angeles, community-based organizations, stone fabrication shops, and other stakeholders to continue to educate and offer resources on the prevention and intervention of silicosis.
- 3) Direct the Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations branch (CEO-LAIR), in collaboration with DPH and DHS to continue to advocate in support of proposals at the state and federal levels that strengthen regulatory standards and enhance resources and education as it relates to silicosis.

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