



Dust and Use of Face Masks

Audience: Site Operatives

Presenter: GHSEA, Site Manager, Trade Supervisors



The risk

Breathing in construction dust such as silica dust from cutting stone or concrete based materials, or wood dust, can have serious detrimental effect to health, in fact recent HSE research has estimated that silica may be responsible for the deaths of over 500 people each year who have worked in construction industry! This is not a pleasant way to die!

The HSE also estimates that around 4,000 people die every year from COPD linked to work activities. Construction workers are one of the high-risk groups because of the dust that they breathe in as part of their work.



Responsibilities – Site Management and Site Operatives

The generation of dust through site work activities cannot always be avoided. Site management have a responsibility to robustly monitor and enforce dust control measures.

Site operatives and their supervisors must ensure that they protect themselves and others around them by following the steps below:

- Provide copies of “face fit test” certificates at induction;
- Wear FFP3 face masks if cutting or in the cut zone;
- Ensure that water suppression is used when cutting concrete, stone, bricks or tiles;
- Ensure that carpenters/ joiners are using M Class LEV when using table/chop saws or routers in addition to wearing a FFP3 facemask;
- When carpenters/ joiners are using smaller hand held circular saws, dust bags must be fitted to the equipment in addition to the operative wearing a FFP3 face mask; and
- Plasterers and jointers must ensure that when they are using powered sanders that a LEV Class L is used, in addition to wearing a FFP3 face mask (these extraction units must be tested annually); and
- Painters should also wear an FFP3 Face mask when sanding down.
- LEV equipment must be examined and tested annually by a competent person.



Wearing beards

Site operatives that wear a beard will not be fully protected from dust when wearing a normal FFP3 face mask. Therefore operatives with beards must not be put into an environment where dust has been generated or carry out tasks that produce dust. This is unless, they have a full face type mask, which is FFP3 rated and has a forced air supply.

Speak to the Site Manager if you have a beard so that you can be loaned the site full face powered positive respirator if one is available.



Dust and Use of Face Masks

Audience: Site Operatives, Customer Care Operatives

Presenter: GHSEA, Site Manager, Trade Supervisors



Face fit testing

All operatives that wear a FFP3 face mask must have had a “face fit test” for the mask that they are wearing. Copies of the test certificates must be supplied to site management, to be retained on site. Operatives must be re-tested annually. Speak to the Site Manager if you do not have a face fit certificate so that you can be loaned the site full face powered positive respirator if one available.



Sweeping and Cleaning Up

Sweeping using a brush makes the dust particles become airborne, therefore, alternative methods of removing dust should be used such as using battery powered vacuum cleaners, with an M class filter.

If there is no alternative to sweeping up then FFP3 facemasks should be worn, the dust should be dampened down with water and signage displayed outside of the plot warning people of a dust hazard.

FFP3 face masks should also be worn when sweeping up outside if dust can become airborne.



Road dust and spoil heaps

Dust can become a nuisance to site operatives and to people living nearby to the construction site; effecting the quality of the air they breathe and covering cars and windows with dust. To mitigate against this problem the following measures must be considered:

- Restrict the speed limit of construction plant on site;
- Damp down roads with a towed water sprinkler;
- If spoil heaps are going to remain in place for a prolonged period then they should be seeded; and
- Restrict the stripping of vegetation or top soil until the last minute.