

The Armorgard

guide to dust



...industry insights from Armorgard

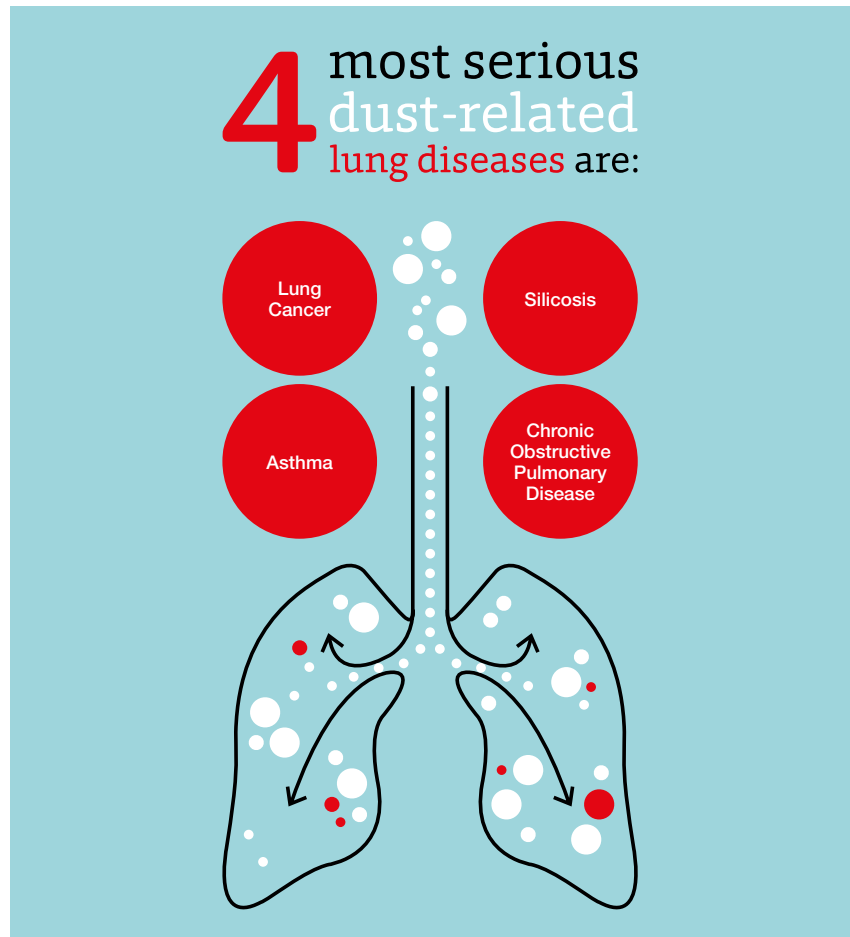
dust: what you need to know

» Why you should read this

Construction dust is a killer. Regularly breathing in dust, caused by cutting or grinding construction materials, can cause life-changing lung diseases which can lead to death. If you're a construction worker or a tradesman, you need to protect yourself from the danger; if you're an employer you must take steps to prevent injury to your workforce.

The most serious dust-related diseases

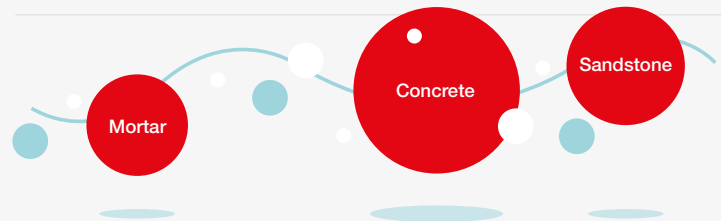
Some of these diseases, such as advanced silicosis or asthma can develop quickly, but most take longer with no obvious symptoms until the damage is done.



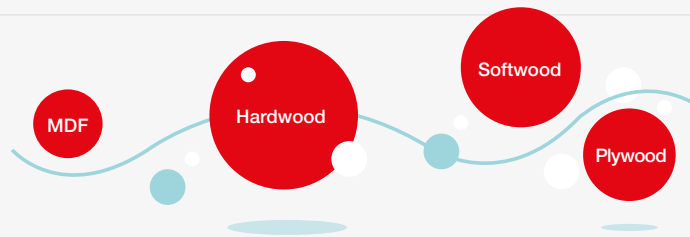
The facts

3 main types of dust

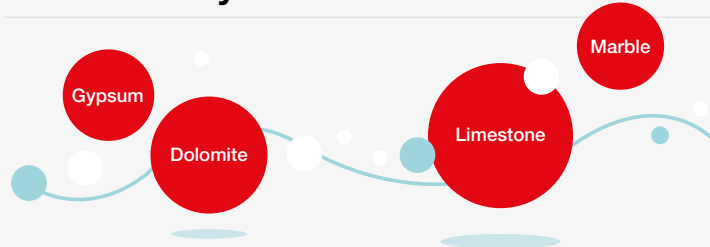
Silica



Wood



Lower Toxicity Dust



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The UK construction industry has the largest number of reported cases of occupational lung disease of any industry.

- Over **500 construction workers die from exposure** to silica dust every single year
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) cover activities that may expose workers to construction dust
- Around **4,000 people die every year** from COPD linked to work
- Construction is among the top 5 industries for deaths from COPD
- **3,500 occupational cancer deaths** are caused by exposure in the construction industry
- COSHH regulations set a limit on the amount of dust you can breathe called a **Workplace Exposure Limit** or WEL
- Protective masks are only effective if they have been "face-fitted".
Masks rely on a tight seal with the face
- Workers can still breathe in harmful levels of dust when working outside

The law



The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) covers activities which may expose workers to construction dust.



Assessing the risks involves looking at tasks, work areas, the time needed to complete a task and how often that task needs to be carried out.

It's fairly obvious, but the **danger to workers increases when using high-energy tools that produce a lot of dust in a short time** (such as cut-off saws, grinders and grit blasters); when working in an enclosed space; when the task takes a long time and when the same task is carried out frequently.

What you can do

Under the COSHH guidelines there are very specific controls set out for common high-risk tasks. They fall under common-sense headings such as stopping or reducing the dust; controlling the dust with water or on-tool extraction through a local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system; and using respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

If you are self-employed or an employer you should familiarise yourself with the guidelines, risks and controls. If you are employed, you should make sure you understand any information provided to you by your employer, check that controls are in place to make your workplace safe and ensure that you're provided with appropriate PPE including a face-fitted mask.

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Make these high risk tasks safe

- **Cutting concrete kerb:** use a block splitter and water suppression
- **Cutting roofing tiles:** use a dedicated cutting area with scaffold board protection and water suppression
- **Sanding plasterboard jointing/drilling holes with hand held rotary tools:** use direct fastening or tools and use cutting station
- **Removing small rubble, dust and debris:** use rubble truck and water spray for damping down, covered shuts and skips, RPE with APF of 20 (correct protective personal equipment)

Equipment that can help

cutting station™

Increase worker safety and eliminate the need for a separate cutting room. CuttingStation is vital for safely cutting lengths of conduit, timber, cable tray and pipe.



» Resources and further help

- www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/construction-dust.htm
- www.wwt.uk.com
- <http://www.breathefreely.org.uk/breathefreelyconstruction.html>

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For further information and help on this topic and to find out about training options please call 023 9238 0280 or email sales@armorgard.co.uk

