



Health and Safety in NZ extractives

Media Release from MinEx

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## **Quarries advised to review procedures after silicosis cases found**

MinEx, the health and safety council for the extractives sector, says it is awaiting more information from WorkSafe about two chronic silicosis cases at an unidentified New Zealand quarry.

CEO Wayne Scott says Paul Hunt, WorkSafe's Chief Inspector Extractives told the annual QuarryNZ conference on Friday that the two cases were formally reported the previous week.

"Naturally, we are concerned for these workers but we understand this has occurred at an atypical quarry which makes materials which are not the focus of most quarries."

MinEx has been active in promoting the risks of respirable crystalline silica – RCS – including four years ago, helping alert WorkSafe, workers and the public to the issues around manufactured stone benchtops. This is now the subject of a major WorkSafe investigation.

Wayne Scott says poor management of RCS can cause accelerated silicosis which can quite rapidly cause fibrosis of the lungs.

"The two workers at the unnamed and apparently atypical quarry are reported to have chronic silicosis which usually results from exposure to RCS dust over more than 20 years.

"Nonetheless, this is of concern to the wider quarry sector. We will be advising our members to review their own procedures for the testing and control of any dust emerging from their operations. They are now also required to monitor their staff's health."

Wayne Scott says it's important to understand that while RCS can be produced in processing various types of stone and rock, most of the dust generated in processing is not RCS.

"If there is any RCS being generated, then the controls needed are much more stringent than any other dust."

He says quarries use a variety of controls for any dust including water suppression, covering loads and air-conditioned vehicles.

After complaints from residents about dust generated by nearby quarries at Yaldhurst near Christchurch, Environment Canterbury installed monitors. The Canterbury District Health Board reviewed the data and found RCS levels were well below international guidelines and no serious public health risk existed.

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