

# Silicosis: reminder to review dust management – MinEx

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Two recent cases of chronic silicosis are thought to have arisen from an ‘a-typical’ quarry site but are a reminder for operators to review their procedures, MinEx says.

The health and safety council for the extractives sector says it is waiting on further information from WorkSafe on the cases and is naturally very concerned for the workers involved.

It does not know which quarry is affected, but says it understands it makes materials which are not the focus of most quarries.

“Nonetheless, this is of concern to the wider quarry sector,” chief executive Wayne Scott says.

“We will be advising our members to review their own procedures for the testing and control of any dust emerging from their operations.”

The chronic silicosis cases were revealed as part of WorkSafe’s presentation to the QuarryNZ conference last week. The two cases had been formally reported the previous week.

## Controlling RCS

Silicosis is a progressive disease that causes fibrosis of the lungs from the inhalation of respirable crystalline silica – RCS – dust. Chronic silicosis usually results from exposure to RCS over more than 20 years.

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

“If there is any RCS being generated, then the [controls](#) needed are much more stringent than any other dust,” he says in a statement.

He says MinEx has been active in promoting the risks of RCS, and helped alert WorkSafe to the issues around manufactured stone benchtops which are now the subject of a major investigation.

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

He points out that quarries are now required to monitor their workers’ health.

Health monitoring standards for permanent staff were introduced with amendments to the Health and Safety at Work (Mining Operations and Quarrying Operations) Regulations 2016. The new requirements came into force last year.