

Health and safety snapshot

Dust strategy 2023–24

Issued May 2024

Dust strategy

WorkSafe's [Dust strategy 2023–24](#) is driving improvements in the management of hazardous dusts to protect workers from harm. It forms part of Priority Three - Respiratory hazards within the [WorkSafe: The way forward](#) strategic plan. This snapshot of the Dust strategy outlines our recent activities and initiatives from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

General industries

Campaigns

WorkSafe supported and promoted the following campaigns:

- Another one fights the dust – Lung Foundation Australia
- Clean air. Clear lungs. – Safe Work Australia
- National Asbestos Awareness Week – Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency



Publications

WorkSafe created and updated **15** publications to educate and assist in reducing the risks associated with working in industries that generate dust during work processes.



Stakeholder engagement

WorkSafe provided community and industry outreach, including:

- hosting the hybrid event, Breathe easy - Occupational health and safety forum 2023, about inhalable toxins during Safe Work Month - [event videos are available online](#)
- delivering the annual registered medical practitioner forum covering silica, asbestos, lead and arsenic
- presenting information about the dust strategy to the Western Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH)
- conducting two forums for Class A asbestos removalists and licensed asbestos assessors
- providing asbestos presentations to environmental health officers
- engaging with six registered training organisations on asbestos VET course information
- presenting asbestos and work health and safety information to the Australian Local Government Association and the Faculty of Asbestos Management of Australia and New Zealand
- discussing regulatory crossover and inspection plans with other Government departments, including via the Government Occupational Hygienists Reference Group (GOHR).



Staff training

WorkSafe inspectors attended training about:

- asbestos and silica
- materials containing asbestos in the retail flooring industry
- occupational hygiene.



Foundry work inspections

Inspectors identified issues with the use of crystalline silica-containing sands for mold making. The major concern was lead exposure.



Action was taken to address ventilation issues, health monitoring, containment of lead to lead process areas, and provision and use of respiratory protection, including clean shave policies and fit testing.

Asbestos-related enforcement action



WorkSafe conducted **490** asbestos-related investigations, including:

- **182** notification of removal matters
- **177** complaints investigated
- **62** licence compliance assessments
- **47** project works
- **22** potential exposure investigations.



Enforcement actions included:

- **397** improvement notices
- **85** verbal directions
- **7** prohibition notices
- **1** potential prosecution for unlicensed asbestos removal
- **1** independent report notice.



In August 2023, Jinning Pty Ltd, a fire assay company, was [fined a total of \\$30,000 plus costs across four charges](#) relating to the failure to provide health surveillance, counselling and biological monitoring for workers in a lead-risk job.



Silica verification project

WorkSafe carried out **29** investigations under its silica verification project, resulting in:

- **119** improvement notices
- **16** notices issued for failing to provide health monitoring.
- **9** notices issued where power tools were used on engineered stone without controls
- **1** prohibition notice.



The project found a continuing level of non-compliance by a large portion of the engineered stone industry.

Concerns included:

- health monitoring not provided
- uncontrolled use of power tools on engineered stone
- workers not clean shaven or fit tested for respirators
- workers not provided with respirators
- workers refusing to wear respirators
- poor housekeeping
- inadequate treatment of recycled process water
- use of compressed air or high-pressure wash system for cleaning slurry
- workers with diagnosed or suspected silicosis continuing to work in the industry against medical advice.



Mining industry

Inspection and enforcement activities

WorkSafe's mining inspections resulted in **180** dust-related defects being identified and **49** dust-related notices being issued.



Inspection program

WorkSafe's mining inspectorate conducts proactive and reactive inspections.



- **553** proactive inspections were conducted in 2023
- **106** reactive inspections were completed in response to air sampling exceedance data, medical surveillance data, or other substantiated information sources.

Stakeholder engagement

- Over **20** presentations on dust hazards and dust management to industry
- **15** presentations on dust or fibre management to mining air quality officers, health and safety managers, occupational hygienists and mine operator executives
- Presentation of a technical paper on silica in Western Australian mining at the AIOH conference.



Air sampling program

As part of the Mines Safety Management System, all mine sites must have a health management plan detailing their management of dust hazards. To measure the effectiveness of these controls, the mine sites must conduct an air sampling program.

18,132 samples were collected in the breathing zone but outside any respiratory protection devices.

The findings included:

- **97.6%** compliance rate
- **459** (2.5% of) samples exceeded the exposure standard
- **27%** of these exceedances were using the correct PPE and no further action was needed.



An exceedance is treated as a near miss or incident.

These exceedances require industry to investigate the cause and develop an action control plan to prevent recurrence, which is reviewed by WorkSafe.

A review of the exceedance data caused WorkSafe to prioritise dust control at primary crushers during 2024.