

**CONTRACTOR GUIDE**

# **What You Need to Know About the New OSHA Silica Dust Standard**



**JamesHardie**

Siding | Trim

# OSHA Silica Dust Standard Overview

Recently, OSHA changed a standard decreasing the permissible exposure limit (PEL) of silica dust that workers can be exposed to. James Hardie wants you to be up to speed on the OSHA silica standard and is here to help you throughout the process.

## What Is Silica?

**Silica** is one of the most common elements on earth. It's found in many everyday products like jewelry, household cleaners, glass and more. It's incredibly stable, which makes it vital for construction materials like asphalt, drywall and cement.

Silica as an element is not harmful or dangerous. However, when materials containing silica are cut, drilled or abraded, this creates nuisance and respirable dust. The respirable dust can be hazardous to those with prolonged or excessive exposure.



## The New Regulation

OSHA sets exposure limits for dust, chemicals and other materials that employees may be exposed to at work or on a jobsite. These exposure limits cover dust from all types of materials, including stone, brick, concrete, drywall, and even wood or wood composites.

The updated OSHA standard reduces the PEL for silica dust by about 80% – from 250  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  to 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ .

A number of industries are impacted by this change. Outside the building products and construction industry, this rule also affects the manufacturing, oil and gas, mining and railroad industries. Compared to masonry, tilework, concrete cutting drywall finishing and earth moving, the silica dust exposure created when cutting fiber cement can be relatively small. James Hardie worked actively with OSHA throughout the rule's development to provide fiber cement installers with simple options to demonstrate compliance.

## What is Table 1?

Table 1 of the revised rule lists several construction site tasks that generate silica dust and specified equipment and procedures – called “engineering controls” – to keep dust below the PEL.

## OSHA Silica Dust Standard Overview (Continued)

OSHA provides a specific Table 1 exemption for cutting fiber cement boards using a handheld power saw (with blade diameter of 8 inches or less)<sup>1</sup>:

*For tasks performed outdoors only:*

- *Use saw equipped with commercially-available dust collection system.*
- *Operate and maintain tool in accordance with manufacturer's instructions to minimize dust emissions.*
- *Dust collector must provide the air flow recommended by the tool manufacturer, or greater, and have a filter with 99% or greater efficiency.*

OSHA has stated that “full and proper implementation” of the specified engineering controls listed in Table 1 “satisfies the employer’s duty to achieve the PEL” meaning that wearing respirators (dust masks) or further exposure monitoring is not needed.<sup>2</sup>

Cutting fiber cement siding is the only task in Table 1 that doesn’t require a respirator.

<sup>1</sup> OSHA Final Silica Rule 2016-04800: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-03-25/pdf/2016-04800.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> OSHA Standard §1926.1153, p 3: <https://www.osha.gov/silica/SilicaConstructionRegText.pdf>

## Facts for Homeowners

Your customers may have questions about the new OSHA silica dust standard. Here are some facts that you can share with them.

- Silica is used in everyday materials, from the dental industry to household cleaners.
- Because it’s so stable, silica is used in sidewalks, roads, buildings, foundations and more.
- Silica is a valuable material that makes James Hardie products durable and able to withstand fires, flood events, harsh winters and hot summers.
- Dust is only created when products that contain silica are cut. There is no exposure risk when siding is on the home.



## OSHA Silica Dust Standard Overview (Continued)

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### How James Hardie Can Help

James Hardie has been preparing for the new OSHA silica dust rule for years and is ready to assist installers and contractors in achieving compliance efficiently and affordably. We have always promoted safe jobsite practices and will continue to do so.

- Our sales representatives and installation specialists are available to help you comply with this new regulation without impacting efficiency on the jobsite.
- We have trained thousands of contractors, installers, and builders in best cutting practices.
- We provide valuable safety information on installation instructions, product labels, and other publications.
- We're ready to work with your safety staff or consultants to provide the assistance you need to demonstrate compliance with the new standard.

### Quick Resources

Find more information at

[www.jhsafesite.com](http://www.jhsafesite.com)

**James Hardie Technical Services**

800-942-7343

# Frequently Asked Questions

## OSHA COMPLIANCE

### Q: How do I become OSHA compliant so I don't get cited for a violation?

**A:** James Hardie has resources and solutions to help its customers achieve compliance. You can find information about the proper way to cut our fiber cement products and other resources at [www.jhsafesite.com](http://www.jhsafesite.com) or call James Hardie Technical Services at 800-942-7343.

### Q: What exactly does OSHA measure?

**A:** OSHA will measure the level of exposure to respirable silica dust over an 8-hour period to determine if a jobsite is at or below the PEL of 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

Note: Only a small fraction (typically less than 5%) of the total dust produced when cutting fiber cement is considered to be respirable silica dust.

## ON THE JOBSITE

### Q: How are fiber cement products safe if silica dust is released when cutting them? Is there any danger to install crews?

**A:** Cutting our fiber cement products is safe when using our guidelines ([www.jhsafesite.com](http://www.jhsafesite.com)), which are designed to reduce the amount of dust produced. There are a number of variables that influence how much dust a worker is exposed to on a construction site. We are here to make it as easy as possible to enable install crews to cut our fiber cement products properly and safely.



### Q: Will my insurance still cover me if I install fiber cement?

**A:** If you follow our guidelines for cutting our fiber cement products safely, we do not see any reason for this to cause a change in insurance coverage. Please contact your insurance agent with additional questions or concerns.

## Frequently Asked Questions (Continued)

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### **Q: Do I need different tools?**

**A:** The answer will depend on multiple factors driven by the jobsite environment, as well as how you currently cut our fiber cement products. The tools that are used to safely cut our siding – HardieBlade® saw blades, dust-collecting saws and standard shop vacuums – can be used to help meet the new standard.

### **Q: If I do need different tools, will the cost be significant?**

**A:** There are many cost-effective options for tools (saws, vacuums, etc.) that meet Table 1 requirements for fiber cement. Even if you do invest in higher-end tools, the total cost per job is low. Using a cost per square foot metric, it's less than a penny per square foot – \$0.54 on the high end and \$0.06 on the low end. Plus, you could potentially cut costs by using a vacuum to extend the life of your tools and reduce cleanup/housekeeping time.

James Hardie has collaborated with a number of installers to identify solutions that are effective, affordable and easy to set up. Should you have any questions, we're prepared to assist crews on-site.

### **Q: Who will train my crew on the new practice?**

**A:** James Hardie can provide resources to help train your crews. Just call James Hardie Technical Services at 800-942-7343 or visit [www.jhsafesite.com](http://www.jhsafesite.com) to schedule a consultation with our technical services team.

### **Q: Do crews have to wear a hazmat suit to install James Hardie? Do they need to tent the house or cutting station?**

**A:** No, crews do not need to make any changes to what they wear or tent any areas of the work site. These are misconceptions that may be perpetuated by companies looking to take advantage of this rule change.

### **Q: Will neighbors have to be notified that fiber cement is being installed and post warning signs in the yard?**

**A:** No. There is no need to do so and this is not referenced in the new OSHA standard.

## **JAMES HARDIE PRODUCTS**

### **Q: Are James Hardie fiber cement products safe to put on homes and move around jobsites or yards?**

**A:** Yes. There is no dust concern from fiber cement once it's installed on the home. Moving or storing fiber cement does not generate significant dust.

## Frequently Asked Questions (Continued)

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### **Q: Will I have to incur additional costs when installing James Hardie siding to comply with the new standard?**

**A:** It depends on how you're currently cutting our fiber cement products. We have a number of existing solutions designed to help ensure that you can comply with the new standard in the most cost-efficient way. Visit [www.jhsafesite.com](http://www.jhsafesite.com) for more information.

### **Q: Is this change going to affect my ability to get James Hardie product?**

**A:** No. Our fiber cement products are still the same safe, dependable and widely available siding that you've been using for years.

### **Q: Are you changing anything about how James Hardie fiber cement products are manufactured?**

**A:** No, there's no need. This is about a rule change, not a concern about our products.

### **Q: How do you now compare to other siding options? Do they have this same issue?**

**A:** Every type of siding – wood, wood composite siding, bricks, stone or fiber cement – produces dust when cut and is subject to a dust standard. James Hardie leads all siding manufacturers in providing resources in the field that help enable our customers to comply with the silica dust standard.

## FOR DEALERS

### **Q: Does this change make it harder or take longer to get your product delivered to my location?**

**A:** No, it will not. There is no change necessary and you should not see any issues with the availability of James Hardie products.

### **Q: Does this change require me to change anything in how I handle/stock your product?**

**A:** No. There's nothing in the handling/stocking process that would cause an issue.



## Looking for more information?

Contact one of our Technical Sales reps at 800-942-7343 or visit [www.jhsafesite.com](http://www.jhsafesite.com) for more details about the new silica rule and James Hardie's support programs.



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