

CUTTING MASONRY: SILICA DUST

Illustrative training scenario - not an actual IPS incident

1 BACKGROUND

Cutting paving blocks, kerbs or flags with a cut-off saw can release harmful respirable silica dust.

2 SCENARIO

Training example: a worker starts dry-cutting paving blocks beside an occupied walkway. Dust spreads to nearby trades.

3 IMMEDIATE RISK

Fine dust can damage lungs even when the job is brief. Stop uncontrolled cutting and keep others away.

4 CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

Cuts were not planned. Dust suppression was unavailable and nearby workers were not separated from the task.

5 KEY CONTROLS

Reduce cuts or use precut materials or a block splitter. Where sawing is necessary, use suitable water suppression or on-tool extraction. HSE specifies H or M class extraction and APF20 RPE for this task; tight-fitting masks need face-fit testing.

6 SUPERVISOR CHECK

Check controls operate correctly, the exclusion area is clear and RPE fits the wearer. Tight-fitting masks require a clean-shaven seal. Review the COSHH assessment and maintenance arrangements before restarting.

STOP • CHECK • ACT

Control dust at its source.

Briefing aid: apply the project risk assessment, method statement and manufacturer instructions.

HSE guidance: [construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/cutting-paving-blocks-kerbs-and-flags.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthrisks/hazardous-substances/cutting-paving-blocks-kerbs-and-flags.htm)