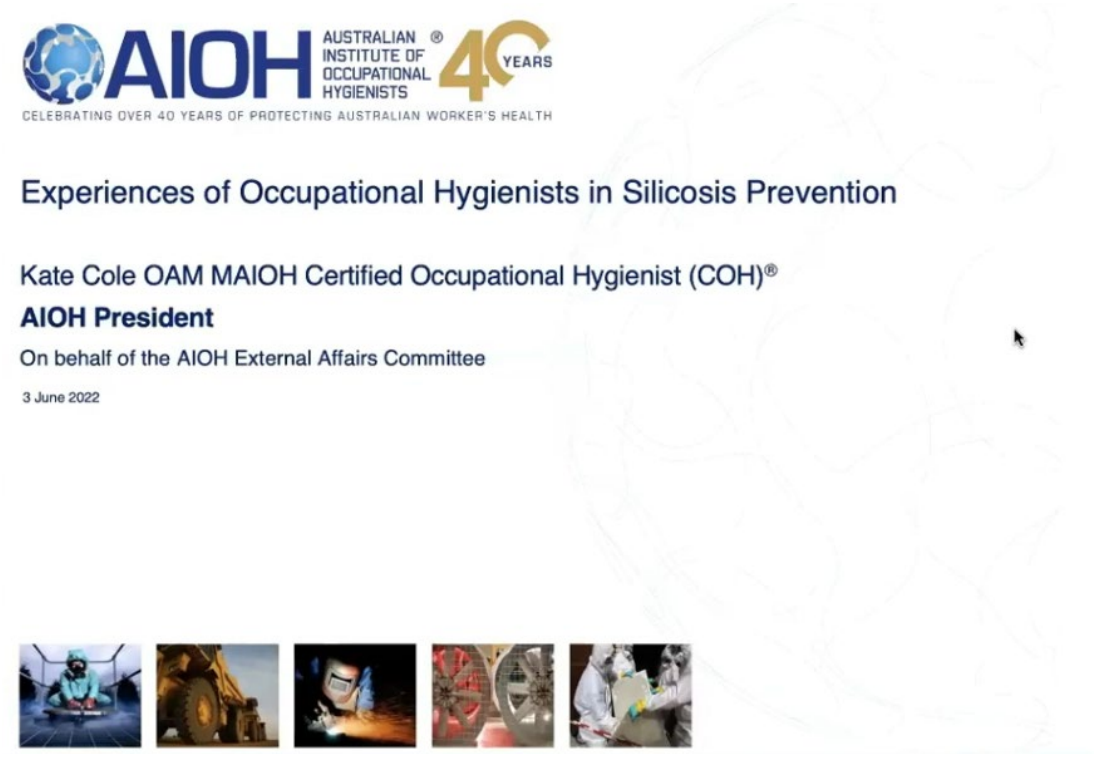
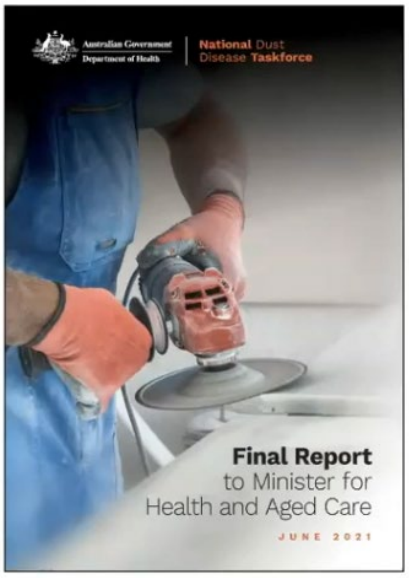
Managing Exposure to RCS across Australian Workplaces

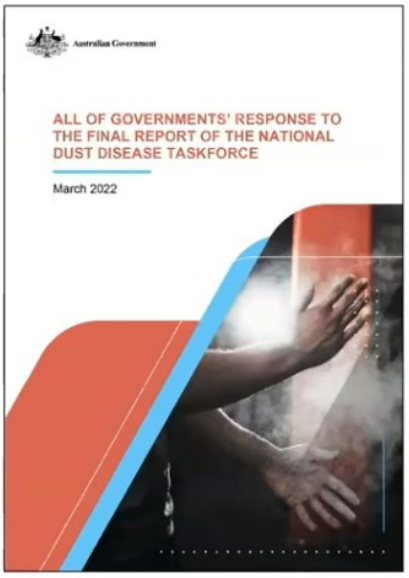
This is a talk on a survey of Australian COH concerning how well was silica dust exposure in construction, tunnelling, and mining being measured, mitigated, and enforced. You can listen to the you tube talk, and below are the main slides shown during the talk.

https://youtu.be/ZjLUzHAFSCE



Background





Materials and methods

- Questions developed by the AIOH External Affairs Committee
- Hosted on menti.com
- Accessible to all members via the member's only area
- Anonymous in nature
- Open for 4 weeks from March 18 – to April 14, 2022
- All information aggregated to ensure anonymity


AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENISTS
40 YEARS
CELEBRATING OVER 40 YEARS OF PROTECTING AUSTRALIAN WORKER'S HEALTH

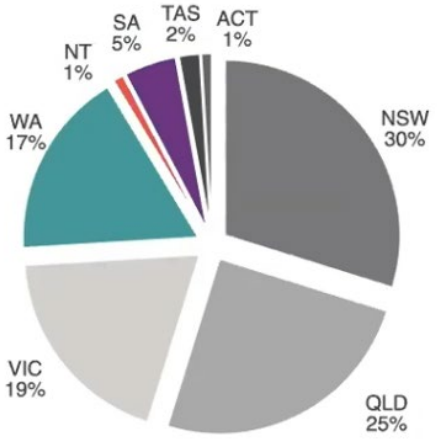
Closing Soon - Survey of occupational hygienists to support the Regulatory Impact Analysis for Respirable Crystalline Silica

Safe Work Australia and EY are undertaking economic analysis and stakeholder consultation to support the Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) of regulatory and non-regulatory options to manage risks associated with respirable crystalline silica (RCS) exposure in Australian workplaces. The AIOH plan to make a submission on this important work. To support this, we are gauging the expertise of our wider membership on the management of exposure to RCS.
This survey will take 5 - 10 minutes depending on the breadth of your experience. All data entered is completely anonymous with the data being aggregated across all participating AIOH members.
We encourage all members who have experience in managing RCS exposure to participate in this survey.
The survey can be accessed by members in My AIOH and appears on the first page - **My Dashboard** - under *Latest News & Updates*.
The survey closes at 5pm 14th April 2022.

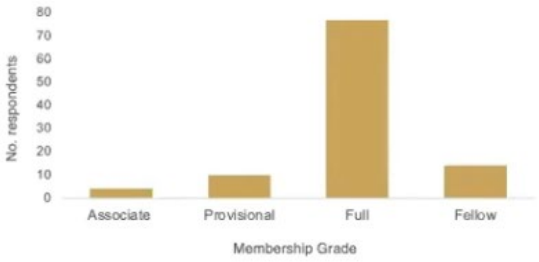
AIOH WEBPAGE

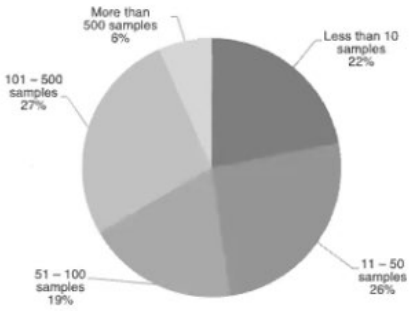
Demographics

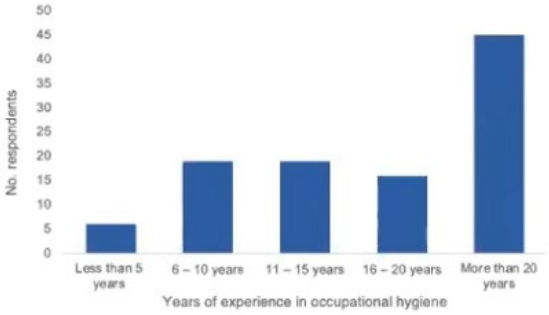
- 105 participants
- 96% professional members
- Largest responses from NSW, QLD, VIC

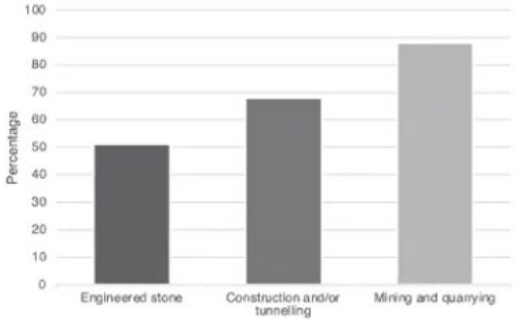


Demographics



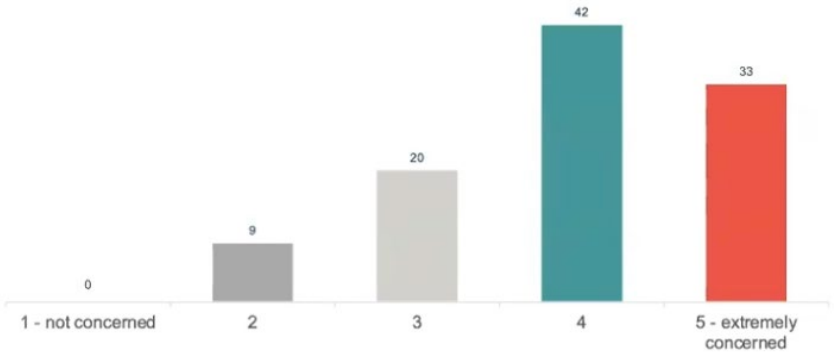






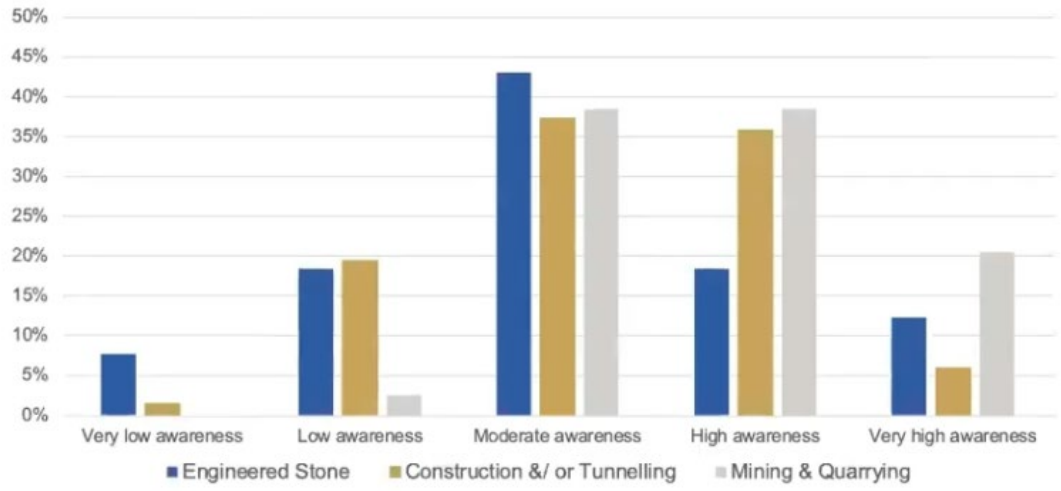
Concern and awareness

Level of concern regarding over-exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS)



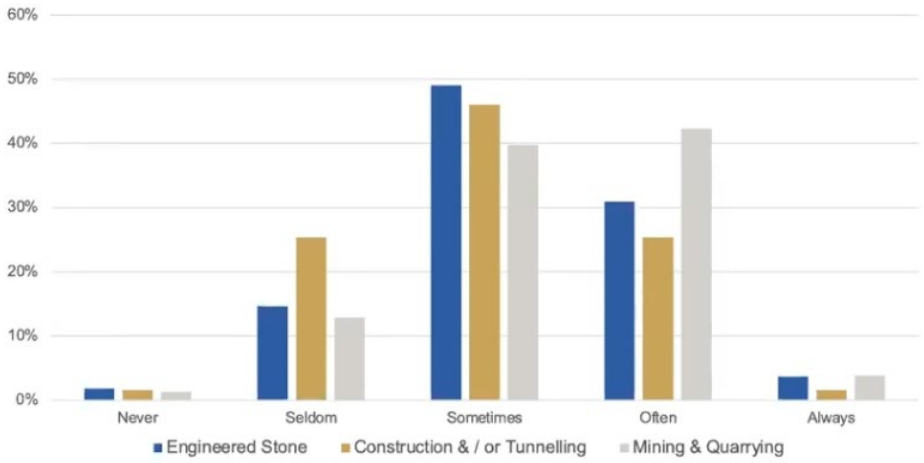
Concern and awareness

Reported level of employer awareness of the risks of exposure to RCS by industry group



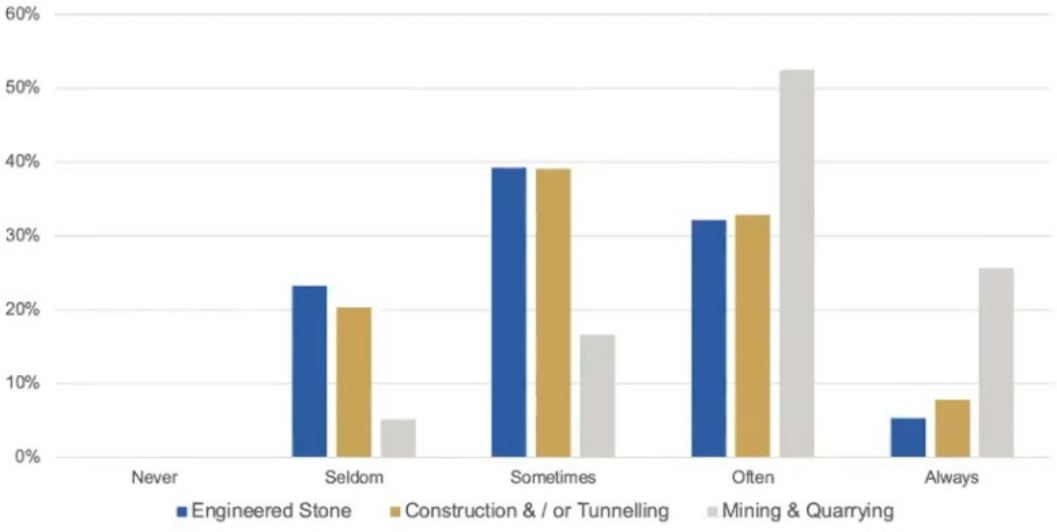
Concern and awareness

Effectiveness of behaviour change initiatives at reducing exposure to below the Workplace Exposure Standard per Industry Sector



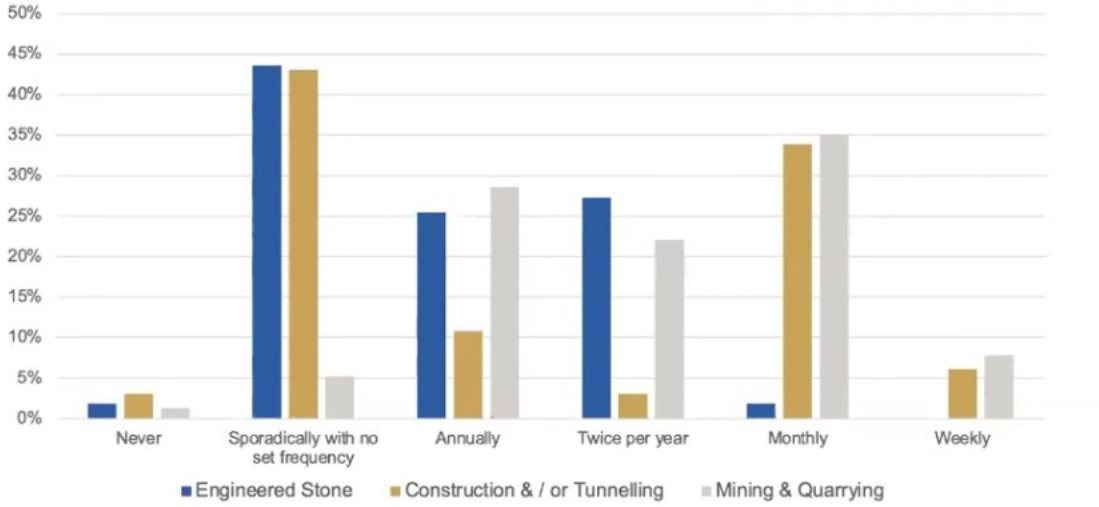
Air monitoring

Is personal air monitoring for RCS being undertaken appropriately to assess exposure?



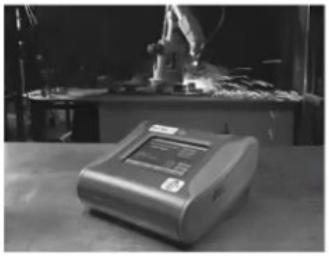
Air monitoring

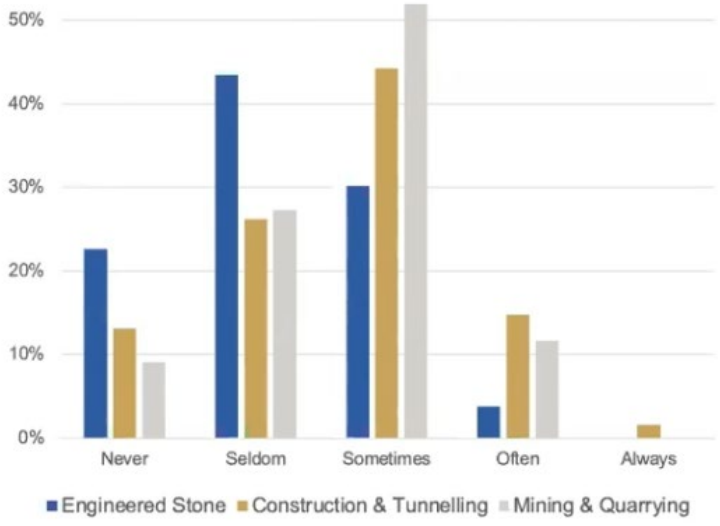
The frequency that personal air monitoring is being undertaken across each industry



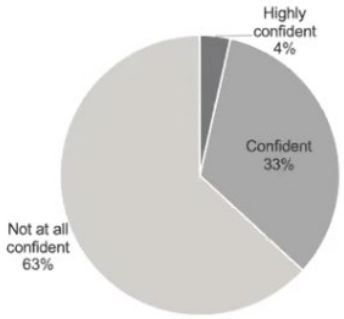
Air monitoring

How often is real-time dust monitoring to support risk assessment / control in industry?





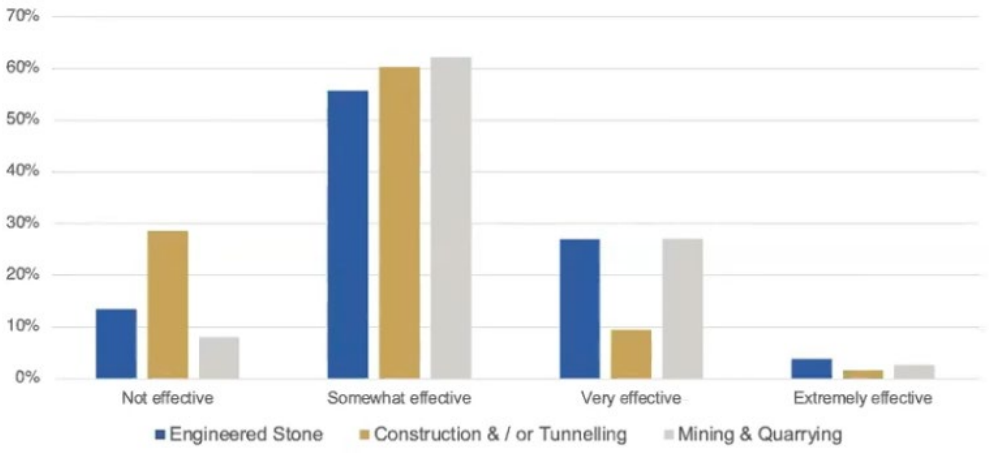
Measurability of RCS



Air monitoring

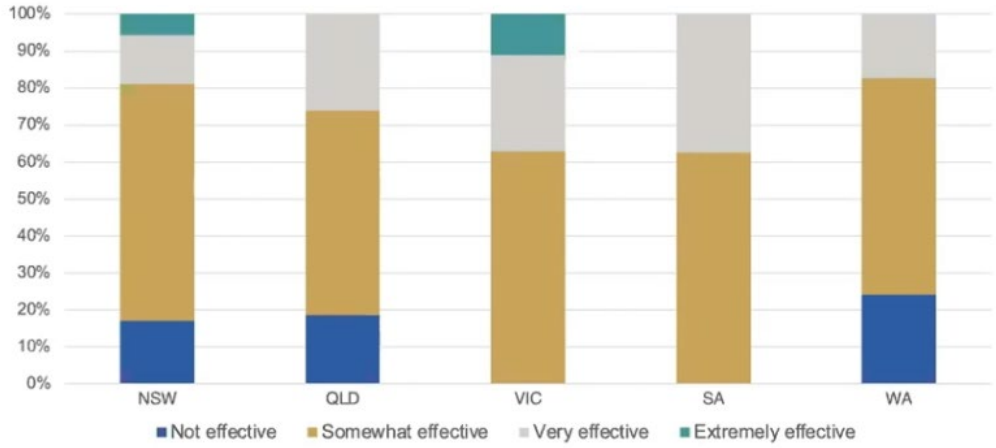
Effectiveness of Regulatory Intervention

Effectiveness of compliance activities by the respective jurisdictional Regulator in reducing exposures to RCS per industry



Effectiveness of Regulatory Intervention

Effectiveness of compliance activities by the respective jurisdictional Regulator in reducing exposures to RCS per state



Barriers to the prevention of silica-related disease

Top 3:

1. A lack of management commitment
2. A lack of financial resources for employers to bring in controls
3. Low compliance with existing regulations

Other:

- Lack of training
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of RCS-specific regulations
- Lack of competence of persons undertaking air monitoring and providing advice

Summary

(i) keeping the status quo

(ii) implementing awareness and behaviour change initiatives

(iii) implementing a national licensing framework

(iv) the regulation of defined high risk crystalline silica processes, for all silica-containing materials

- The majority of occupational hygienists are concerned about the over-exposure of workers to RCS
- Air-monitoring not being performed appropriately the majority of the time
- Concerns for exposures exceeding and having the potential for higher exposures
- Employers awareness was the highest in the mining sector
- Disparity in effectiveness of behaviour change initiatives, air monitoring, use of real-time monitoring
- Regulatory intervention only 'somewhat effective'
- Reporting of over-exposures should be mandatory

Conclusion

- Occupational hygienists report that Australian workers are being over-exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica and that this is cause for concern
- We need to move away from the *status quo* towards a strategy with an increased focus on controlling exposure, measuring control effectiveness, reporting of overexposures and increased enforcement to ensure compliance with the Workplace Exposure Standard & to protect workers
- A nationally consistent approach to RCS exposure control across all industrial sectors is recommended
- The experiences of occupational hygienists support the need for a regulatory strategy with an increased focus on controlling and measuring exposure
- Silicosis is an irreversible lung disease but can be prevented, but there needs to be a greater focus on exposure control through regulatory and educational interventions