Press Release

Not for op-ed

DATE: NOVEMBER 21, 2025

TO: MENDOCINO COUNTY NEWS MEDIA
FROM: MENDOCINO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
CHARLES EVANS, MD, DEPUTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

PUBLIC ADVISORY

Silicosis Cases in Countertop Workers Continue to Rise, as Silicosis Becomes a Reportable Disease in California

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has issued a statewide advisory as silicosis cases continue to increase among workers who cut or finish engineered stone used in "quartz countertops." Silicosis became a reportable disease in California in June 2025, requiring healthcare providers to report suspected or confirmed cases within seven days.

Since 2019, CDPH has identified 432 cases, including 25 worker deaths and 48 lung transplants linked to engineered stone fabrication. While no cases have been identified in Mendocino County at this time, individuals who have worked in countertop fabrication—especially with engineered stone—may be at risk.

Silicosis is preventable. Workers can reduce exposure by using water during cutting, using proper dust-control equipment, and wearing appropriate respirators. Employers are required under Cal/OSHA regulations to control silica dust and keep workers safe. For more information, see the website at www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5204.html.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to ask patients about past or current countertop fabrication work and to consider silicosis in both asymptomatic and symptomatic at-risk workers. Make the diagnosis using imaging (chest X-ray, chest CT) and pulmonary function tests (spirometry, diffusing capacity) and refer early to pulmonary and occupational medicine physicians for diagnosis and coordination of care.

Recommendations for Workplace Safety for At-Risk Workers

Inhaling any silica dust is dangerous. **Workers can help protect themselves by:**

- Using large amounts of water when cutting or grinding countertops
- Using specialized vacuums designed to safely remove dust
- Wearing the appropriate respirator at all times during dust-generating tasks

For more information and safety resources, visit the **CDPH Occupational Health Branch** website at www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/OHB/Pages/silicosis.aspx or the **CDC NIOSH** website at www.cdc.gov/niosh/silica/about. Questions may be emailed to silicosis@cdph.ca.gov.

###