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Dust at workplace

Posted by Anonymous on Tue, 2015-11-17 18:00

Dust at workplace: Good afternoon Science ASSIST.

There is construction(renovation) going on adjacent to my lab. A hole has been knocked down to create an entrance to the new student's lab and the renovation of two additional classes for the Science area. While the construction is going on, we are still expected to carry out our duties.

My HOD is really good and told us to minimise going into the lab. The whole lab is covered in very fine crystalline silica from the cutting of the bricks and the concrete slab (to put in new wiring). Nothing has been said about the clean up after the work has been completed. We were told the work should only take 2 1/2 weeks. Could you advise on what our rights are with regards to this matter please. Should the lab technicians be responsible for the clean up?

The dust is in every nook and corner of my lab.

Voting:



No votes yet

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

Showing 1-1 of 1 Responses

Dust at workplace

Submitted by sat on 24 November 2015

Answer reviewed 22 February 2023

Exposure to dust

Workers should not be exposed to construction dust without suitable protection. Exposure to fine dust is a concern because the inhalation of these particles has the potential to cause respiratory diseases or to exacerbate existing respiratory conditions (such as asthma). For further information see the links below regarding exposure to dust.

Representation

When you have concerns about performing your work in an environment that may have an adverse effect on your health, it is important to communicate with your employer, either directly or through a health and safety representative. Each state and territory has similar legislation allowing for the election of health and safety representative in workplaces, who will then work collaboratively so that appropriate action can be taken to address and resolve safety issues. For further information, see the links below regarding health and safety representatives.

Clean up

The responsibility of who cleans up the dust is an industrial matter to work out at a school level. A certain level of cleaning up should be undertaken by the builder, as it is a construction site. However, if the dust has spread throughout the preparation area and onto scientific equipment, then this may best be cleaned by someone who has knowledge of science equipment. It would be reasonable to expect that either a cleaning contractor or extra help is provided to assist with cleaning. Safety precautions should be taken to minimise the redistribution of dust during the clean-up process.

Future planning

Whilst it may be too late for your situation, it is recommended that schools consider planning for upgrading facilities during school holiday breaks to minimise the disruption to the effective support of the teaching programme. Where renovations are already occurring, construction areas should be isolated from occupied areas of the school. If dust is being generated through construction activity, the area should be sealed to prevent the dust dispersing to occupied parts of the building. Equipment should be either covered to protect them from dust or be relocated. For further information, see the links below regarding management of renovations on school sites.

Additional information

Links regarding exposure to dust

Safe Work Australia. 2010. *National Hazard Exposure Worker Surveillance: Exposure to dust, gases, vapours, smoke and fumes and the provision of controls for these airborne hazards in Australian workplaces*, Safe Work Australia website
https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/nhews_e... see p 1 Summary and p47 Main recommendations

Health and Safety Executive. (nd). Dust, Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the (UK) Health and Safety Executive website. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/faq-dust.htm>

Department of Commerce, WorkSafe Division, (2014, May 21) *Guide to using dust masks in construction work*, Retrieved from the Department of Mines, Industry, Regulation and Safety website: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/guide-using-dust-masks-const...>

Department of Commerce, WorkSafe Division. (2014, May 21) *Hazardous or combustible dusts, fumes and fibres*, Retrieved from the Department of Mines, Industry, Regulation and Safety website: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/hazardous-or-combustible-dus...>

Links regarding health and safety representatives

NSW: 'Health and safety representatives', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the WorkCover NSW website: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/consultation@work/hea...>

NT: 'Health and Safety Representatives', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the Worksafe NT website: <http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au/SafetyAndPreventions/HealthAndSafetyRepres...>

Qld: 'Health and safety representatives and health and safety committees', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the WorkCover Queensland website, <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/safety-and-prevention/creating-safe-work...>

SA: 'Health and Safety Representatives', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the SafeWork SA website, <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/notify/health-and-safety-representatives>

Tas: 'Health and safety representatives', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the WorkSafe Tasmania website, <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/Health-and-Safety/managing-safety/hea...>

Vic: 'Election of Health And Safety Representatives', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the WorkSafe Victoria website, <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/election-health-and-safety-representatives>

WA: 'Safety and health representatives', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the Worksafe WA website, <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/who-we-assist/health-and-safety-represent...>

Links regarding management of renovations on school sites

Brenner, W. (2009), *A Principal's Guide to On-Site School Construction*, Retrieved from the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities website: <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=On-Site+School+Construction&id=ED508014>

Vermont (USA) Department of Health. (nd) 'Air quality and school renovation', Retrieved (22 February 2023) from the Vermont (USA) Department of Health website, <https://www.healthvermont.gov/environment/school>

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