



# TAILGATE SAFETY

## CEMENT & CONCRETE – PPE

Working with cement and concrete, without wearing the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), can be dangerous. Many cement mixtures contain substances that can be hazardous, like silica, lime, gypsum, nickel, cobalt and chromium.

Breathing cement dust could cause chronic bronchitis, silicosis and cancer. Acute silicosis can occur after a few weeks of very high exposure (sandblasters). Symptoms of silicosis are shortness of breath, coughing, fever, and weight loss. Chronic silicosis, which permanently damages the lungs, is rarely seen in workers with less than 10-years of exposure.

Cement mixtures create exposure to other chemicals such as form oils, curing, agents, bond breakers, and retardants. Remember to always check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the mixture that you are working with to make sure you are using the appropriate personal protective equipment for the exposure.

Cement dust and wet cement can cause, eye irritations, burns, rashes, and other kinds of skin irritations. Lyme, commonly found in most cements, is usually the cause.

Methods of protecting yourself from breathing cement and concrete dust may include:

- Staying out of dusty areas when possible
- Wet down work area to control the dust
- Use power tools with HEPA filters when you're cutting or drilling concrete
- Use special HEPA vacuum to clean up the dust.
- Wear a respirator with Hepa cartridges if there is a lot of dust in the air

To protect your skin and eyes from exposure:

- Don't get wet or dry cement on your skin or in your eyes. If you do, immediately wash it off with water
- Wear goggles, or safety glasses with side shields, to protect yourself from splashes
- Wear boots and other protective clothing, when necessary
- Wear gloves. Use a type that is impermeable. Leather or cloth gloves will not protect you.

In California, the Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) for cement dust is 10 mg of cement dust per cubic meter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift. The limits are lower if the dust is very fine and easy to breathe deep into the lungs. The limit is also lower if the dust contains toxic substances like chromium. Don't expose yourself to a potential safety hazard. Review the MSDS and know what you are working with and the applicable safety procedures required.

**Training Tips:** a) Outline PPE your company requires workers to use and when. Have the PPE (gloves, goggles, etc.) onhand to show the employees. b) Show employees how to put on the PPE, have them demonstrate they know how.



**North Coast Builders Exchange ~Tailgate Topics**  
**Ph (707) 542-9502**                      **Fax (707) 542-2027**