

MOTION

In recent years, the rise in popularity of engineered stone countertops has resulted in an increase of silicosis cases among young Latino immigrant men. Engineered stone is known to contain up to 93 percent crystalline silica, whereas natural stone, like granite, has 10 to 45 percent. The cutting, grinding, molding, and polishing of these materials release respirable crystalline silica particles that, when inhaled, expose workers to the risk of silicosis, an incurable, progressively disabling, and fatal lung disease. Unsafe silica dust exposure can also lead to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or kidney disease. It has raised concerns globally, with Australia becoming the first country in the world to ban engineered stone, which will come into effect in most Australian jurisdictions in July 2024.

From 2010 to 2022, 48 cases of silicosis have been documented among these workers, and nearly half of these cases were identified in 2022. A 2019 special program by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) found widespread noncompliance with Title 8 standards in the Stone Fabrication Industry. In December 2023, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board (OSHB), the standards-setting agency within Cal/OSHA, adopted an emergency temporary standard (ETS) that went into effect on December 29, 2023, to protect workers from silicosis. The ETS includes additional employee exposure control precautions, such as implementing methods to effectively suppress dust by using a water jet cutting machine. To protect workers and address the silicosis epidemic, the City should work on developing public awareness of the issue to prevent more silicosis cases among workers.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Building and Safety, with the assistance of the Economic and Workforce Development Department, the Bureau of Sanitation, the Chief Legislative Analyst, and in partnership with the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, to report on an implementation plan for a comprehensive, multilingual public awareness campaign to inform impacted communities, industry workers, and consumers about the hazards of engineered stone products containing crystalline silica, such as:

- Development of multilingual educational materials, including brochures, posters, and digital content, explaining the health hazards related to silica dust, safe handling practices for engineered stone, and the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Organization of workshops and training sessions conducted by industry professionals, including labor representatives, to instruct stone-fabrication workers on the latest safety protocols, risk mitigation strategies, and compliance with legal regulations, and proper use of tools and PPE. After completion of such workshops and training sessions, each stone fabrication worker can become certified with the approved program; and
- Implementation of a community engagement strategy that includes the distribution of multilingual public service announcements through local media and partnerships with promotoras, organizations, and community leaders to ensure wide-reaching communication on silica safety.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council request the City Health Commission with the assistance of the Bureau of Sanitation to report with recommendations on regulatory approaches on the use of silica-rich materials, such as engineered stone, in the City to ensure a safe working environment for workers.


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PRESENTED BY:

Bob Blumenfeld *Imelda Padilla*

BOB BLUMENFELD
Councilmember, 3rd District

IMELDA PADILLA
Councilmember, 6th District

Monica Rodriguez

MONICA RODRIGUEZ
Councilwoman, 7th District

SECONDED BY:

Heather Hill

ORIGINAL