Engineered stone and *silica*: what to ask

HSE's first COSHH sheet for engineered stone (spring 2026) effectively rules out dry cutting and asks fabricators for water suppression, powered respirators and health surveillance. It is guidance for fabricators, not a ban, and does not address specifiers. This sheet gives questions to ask and wording to specify.

Compliance guidance. HSE's position was read on hse.gov.uk and press.hse.gov.uk on 5 November 2026 (page dates are in the sources list). HSE's guidance is for fabricators and installers, not designers, and is not a ban. This is procurement guidance, not legal, occupational hygiene or medical advice, and it does not say that any material is safe. Check the current HSE pages and take advice from an occupational hygienist or HSE adviser. We hold no data yet from our partner stone workshop and make no statement about it.

AT A GLANCE

Question	What the sources say	Source and date
What it is	Artificial stone made from crushed natural stone or minerals bonded with resin. HSE: can contain up to 95% crystalline silica.	HSE, 11 May 2026; sheet ST3A
The hazard	Cutting, grinding and polishing make respirable crystalline silica (RCS) dust. HSE: it can cause irreversible lung damage, silicosis, COPD and lung cancer, before symptoms appear.	HSE page, updated 29 Apr 2026
Is it banned?	HSE calls its sheet guidance, not new law or a formal prohibition, and describes the controls in it as legal requirements under COSHH.	HSE, 11 May and 25 Jun 2026
Dry cutting	Effectively ruled out unless an equally or more effective control is shown. HSE research: 5 to 10 times the RCS exposure of wet methods.	HSE, 11 May 2026
Main controls	Lowest-silica stone; on-tool water suppression; mist control; powered respirators, APF of at least 20; health surveillance; regular cleaning.	Sheet ST3A
Exposure limit	RCS: 0.1 mg/m^3, 8-hour time-weighted average (respirable fraction); carcinogen notation where generated by work.	EH40/2005, 4th ed. 2020, Table 1
Enforcement	More than 1,000 inspections of fabricators over 12 months. Four prohibition notices served by the end of May 2026.	HSE, 11 May and 25 Jun 2026
Who is addressed	Fabricators, installers, distributors; manufacturers, suppliers and importers have a duty to supply risk information. Designers and specifiers are not mentioned.	HSE, 11 May and 25 Jun 2026
Natural stone	Silica is in most rocks, sands and clays. HSE's worktop installer page covers natural and artificial stone dust.	HSE page, updated 16 Jan 2025

All HSE items were read on 5 November 2026. HSE's pages change: check the current wording before you rely on this sheet.

EIGHT QUESTIONS TO PUT TO A FABRICATOR

1. How will my material be cut, edged, drilled and polished (water on every tool, no dry cutting)?
2. What is the crystalline silica content (% by weight) and where is the safety data sheet?
3. What respiratory protection do your workers wear (powered, APF of at least 20)?
4. Is there a health surveillance programme for workers regularly exposed?
5. What dust and mist extraction and cleaning do you use?
6. Has HSE served an enforcement notice on you or the workshop doing the work?
7. What is cut off site, and what on site?
8. Who installs, and how are waste and slurry handled?

SPECIFICATION WORDING

FABRICATION METHOD

All cutting, grinding, edging, drilling and polishing of [engineered stone / natural stone] to use on-tool water suppression with mist control. Dry cutting is not permitted [unless the fabricator shows in writing, before work starts, an equally or more effective control]. Sink, hob and tap cut-outs to be made in the workshop before delivery.

SILICA DECLARATION

The supplier is to declare the crystalline silica content ([ ]% by weight) of each material offered and issue the current safety data sheet with the tender. Where [engineered stone] is specified, the tender is to name the lowest-silica product that meets [colour and performance requirement] and any lower-silica alternative offered.

FABRICATOR'S CONFIRMATIONS

Before order the fabricator is to confirm in writing: that a COSHH assessment has been made for the work; the respiratory protective equipment provided [powered air purifying respirators, assigned protection factor at least 20, for hand-held rotary tools]; the health surveillance arrangements; the dust and mist extraction in use; and any HSE enforcement notice in the last [12] months.

SITE CUTTING AND CLEANING

No dry cutting, dry sweeping or compressed-air cleaning on site. Any unavoidable site cut to be made [outdoors / in a restricted, ventilated area] with a water supply, by trained operatives. Clean by wet methods or a Class M vacuum, and remove waste and slurry [daily].

TERMS USED

Engineered stone

A man-made slab of crushed stone bound with resin, which can contain a very high proportion of crystalline silica (HSE says up to 95%).

Respirable crystalline silica (RCS)

Very fine dust containing crystalline silica that, when breathed in, can cause silicosis and other lung disease; cutting stone dry creates large amounts.

COSHH

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002: employers must prevent exposure to hazardous substances such as stone dust or, where that is not reasonably practicable, adequately control it.

PAPR and APF

A powered air purifying respirator (PAPR) supplies filtered air to the wearer. The assigned protection factor (APF) is the reduction in dust breathed in that the equipment gives: HSE says an APF of 20 cuts it by a factor of 20, and sheet ST3A asks for at least 20.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- HSE, Working engineered stone: control silica risk: updated 29 April 2026; read 5 Nov 2026.
- HSE, COSHH essentials sheet ST3A: PDF dated 23 April 2026; read in full 5 Nov 2026.
- HSE press releases, 11 May 2026 and 25 June 2026: read 5 Nov 2026.
- HSE, Silica dust and Installing stone worktops: updated 29 April 2026 and 16 January 2025; read 5 Nov 2026.
- HSE, EH40/2005 Workplace exposure limits, 4th edition 2020: Table 1; page updated 26 Feb 2026; read 5 Nov 2026.
- SafeWork NSW (Australia), What are crystalline silica and engineered stone: indicative ranges, not UK; undated; read 5 Nov 2026.
- Worktop Fabricators Federation, Silica and silicosis: trade body page; undated; read 5 Nov 2026.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/engineered-stone-and-silica-guidance. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.