



Matt Kean

Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES PLAN TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM DANGEROUS WORKPLACE CHEMICALS

The NSW Government today launched a five-year project to help protect workers against injuries and diseases from dangerous chemicals in the workplace.

Minister for Better Regulation Matt Kean said crystalline silica and formaldehyde have been given top priority by the government as those of greatest risk to NSW workers.

“Every worker across this state has the right to a safe and healthy workplace, especially those who work with hazardous chemicals on a daily basis,” he said.

“More than 10,000 businesses will be visited over the next five years in a concerted effort to eliminate injuries and disease associated with these substances.

“Tragically between 2012 and 2015, eight workers died, 6,000 were injured, and 250 were permanently disabled in incidents involving hazardous chemicals.

“SafeWork is committed to driving down that number so that every worker who heads off in the morning returns home safely to their family at night.”

Mr Kean said SafeWork would engage business, industry and stakeholders over the next five years to improve safety standards and workplace practices while enhancing hazardous chemical laws.

“We will work closely with other work health and safety regulators to review national standards and ensure they are in line with international best practice,” he said.

“Health monitoring tests will also be reviewed to ensure they are most effective for detecting occupational respiratory diseases.”

Mr Kean said SafeWork is also partnering with iCare’s ‘Lung Bus’ to provide subsidised health monitoring in Sydney and regional NSW, and rebates are available to small businesses to improve chemical safety.

“Whether you are an employer or a worker, and regardless of your industry, occupation or background, workplace safety is everyone’s responsibility,” he said.

For fact sheets, and to participate in a free webinar, visit the [SafeWork NSW](#) website or call 13 10 50.

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BACKGROUND:

Crystalline silica is a natural substance found in most rocks, sands and clay, and in building products such as bricks, concrete and caesarstone. When disturbed by blasting, chipping or grinding, crystalline silica dust can get into a worker's lungs and cause the lung disease silicosis.

Formaldehyde is a colourless, flammable and gaseous substance used in products such as MDF pressed woodboard, glues, embalming fluids and sterilisers in laboratories and funeral homes, and as a disinfectant in farming. It can cause skin, eyes, nose, and throat irritations.