

Silica Cleanup: Keep Settled Dust from Becoming Exposure

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | October 12, 2026 | Discussion + field verification

Why this matters

Cutting may be finished while exposure is still possible. Sweeping, emptying a collector or disturbing dried residue can put settled silica dust back into the air.

Objective: Identify the approved cleanup method and verify its equipment and waste-handling steps.

Key hazards or failure points

Dry sweeping; compressed-air cleanup; leaking collection equipment; dust released during emptying; exposure of nearby crews.

Practical controls

- Use the employer's silica plan for cleanup and waste handling. Have the competent person resolve an unlisted task before starting.
- Use planned wet methods, HEPA-filtered vacuuming or another approved method that minimizes exposure; prevent additional slip or electrical hazards.
- Control access and include collector emptying, filter maintenance and required respiratory protection in the plan.

Verify It in the Field

The competent person matches the residue and cleanup task to the written plan, including nearby-worker exposure.

The operator checks the specified vacuum, filters, seals and prescribed function indicators against manufacturer instructions; a running motor is insufficient evidence.

Confirm the waste-transfer method, containers and receiving area before opening collection equipment. Record actual findings, responsible person and time.

Stop and reassess

Hold for an unknown residue, missing method, damaged collector or uncontrolled dust. Do not improvise dry sweeping or compressed-air cleaning. Correct, recheck and rebrief before restarting.

Ask the crew

1. What could release dust during cleanup?
2. What proves this equipment fits the method?
3. Who resolves an exception or changed condition?

Use this HOP tool — Procedure use and adherence: Choose the cleanup step most likely to release dust. Compare the current instruction with the residue, equipment and waste route in front of you. Name a mismatch that would require a hold, and identify who can revise and approve the method.

Sources: OSHA 1926.1153(f)–(g); OSHA construction silica FAQs; DOE Vol. 2, pp. 20–21. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/silica-dust-cleanup