

10th July 2024

Our statement on stone fabrication and silicosis.

Bellagio Marble Ideas –Silicosis, the risks, prevention, and safe working conditions.

As one of the leading stone fabricators in the UK, and a founding member of the WFF [Worktop Fabricators Federation - an industry body setup to raise the standards across the industry], we take the health and safety of our workforce and customers very seriously and felt it important to release a statement to outline our position in relation to silicosis concerns.

Is there any danger to stone worktop owners or Bellagio Marble Ideas staff?

No. There is no health risk in handling, shipping, installing, or using engineered stone worktops. Fine particles of respirable silica dust are created only during the cutting and polishing processes at the manufacturing stage. They are therefore purely to do with factory management in the fabrication process.

How has Bellagio Marble Ideas offset this risk?

At Bellagio Marble Ideas all major stone fabrication is handled within our state-of-the-art fabrication centres, our processes have been assessed to negate risk. Our fabrication centres have been created with ventilation as a primary concern. Our teams are trained and contracted to always wear protective clothing when in the factory in line with HSE requirements. Our stone is cut using state-of-the-art CNC waterjet machinery to eliminate dust and the high-risk teams have been supplied with air fed masks to remove the possibility of inhaling silica dust.

Is the HSE [Health & Safety Executive] aware?

Yes. Respirable dust in general has always been a high priority for factory inspections, and the HSE understands the additional risks to health associated with breathing microscopic particles of carcinogenic silica dust. Current HSE guidance for factory owners and enforcement teams reads:

“Products containing silica can be processed safely when proper controls are put in place. We would urge all manufacturers and fitters to ensure that they use suitable controls to protect their workers and themselves from inhaling silica dust.”

So who is at risk?

As seen in the recent cases of silicosis from the worktop industry, non-professionals and non-specialists are most at risk.

Professional worktop fabricators cut stone in factory environments, on specialist machinery, with water-suppression to capture dust at the cutting blade. Polishers using state of the art filtered masks.

The biggest risk to workers' safety, and their customers' safety in the UK comes from the dust created by builders or joiners buying stone from distributors and dry-cutting in customers' gardens with an angle-grinder or modified joinery tools.

What precautions do I need to take?

Always buy from reputable fabricators.

Start by checking for WFF membership. As a founding member of the WFF, Bellagio Marble Ideas are at the forefront of all aspects of the stone worktop industry. We operate automated cutting tools using state of the art dust suppression, implement strict H&S measures for staff, undertake regular health audits of their workers and hold detailed data sheets to prove the provenance of the materials we supply.

What is the WFF doing about this?

Championing best practice. The WFF was originally established to share best-practice, keep our workers as safe as possible and keep our processes as clean as possible. The WFF is recognised as the voice of professional fabricators alongside trade unions and other stone and glass industry bodies in the HSE's 'Charge' advisory group.

The WFF supports the move to natural stone and other engineered worktop products with less silica content as this will reduce the risks to workers. Processing of all stone worktops should only be carried out by professionals who are properly trained, using appropriate equipment to manage the risks.

Should you have any questions, or concerns, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of the team. We're more than happy to help.

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