

## Contractor fined £20k for silica dust exposure

**Just a day after the launch of a parliamentary inquiry into the impact of silicosis on construction workers comes news of a contractor fined £20,000 for failing to manage the risks.**

Lancashire-based Playscape Design, a landscaping contractor specialising in playground construction, was prosecuted by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) after failing to provide employees with adequate control measures to prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS).

Greater Manchester magistrates heard how, on 23rd March 2018, the HSE carried out an unannounced inspection of a site at Newbank Garden Centre in Radcliffe and found two employees of Playscape Design using a power tool to cut flagstones without any respiratory protective equipment.

The HSE inspector served a prohibition notice to stop work and then served an improvement notice, requiring the company to provide adequate control from exposure to RCS.

But the company failed to provide evidence of compliance within the deadline and a second, similar job was completed at the same site with no adequate control measures in place.

Playscape Design Limited of Ball Grove Drive, Colne, Lancashire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 7(1) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and also admitted not complying with an improvement notice, which is an offence under Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,000.

HSE inspector Rebecca Hamer said after the hearing: *“The working conditions we encountered were putting the health of the employees at risk due to exposure to RCS, which is released when silica-containing materials are cut with a powered tool. Exposure to respirable crystalline silica can cause life-threatening diseases including silicosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), which can lead to impaired lung function, lung cancer and death. This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards.”*