

Official statement on silicosis in the quartz industry

The risks associated with the inhalation of crystalline silica dust by some operators working in the stone industry have recently made the Spanish and international headlines with a series of publications that we believe are detrimental to the reputation of quartz-based engineered stone products and, indirectly, to those who manufacture and process them.

Breton SpA, the world's leading manufacturer of machinery and technology for the production of composite and natural stone, believes it is appropriate to provide clarity on some key issues.

The problem of silicosis prevention does not only concern the processing of quartz slabs. Crystalline silica is present, to varying degrees, in many other materials used in construction and architecture: ceramic slabs, granite slabs, sandstone slabs, quartzite slabs, and many others.

The cases highlighted in the media concern events that occurred in the not-so-recent past when the problem of crystalline silica was not under scrutiny by regulators as it rightly is today and, therefore did not find proper attention in the slab processing industry.

The cases of silicosis cited in the press are the consequence of "dry" slab processing and in the absence of the proper safety and health protection measures for the operator.

Today, however, work is done almost everywhere with automatic machines, using water, and vacuum systems, and with appropriate personal protection, in full compliance with current regulations.

In addition, most manufacturers of engineered stone slabs apply precise instructions on their slabs on how to process them properly.

It is important to remember that quartz slabs, once transformed into finished products such as kitchen countertops, represent a product that is completely inert and safe for the end consumer, easy to clean and stain resistant, which does not release any pollutants into the environment or to the touch. Therefore, it is absolutely hygienic and recommended for family environments.

Breton has always invested in the safety of its machinery and the work environments in which it is installed, raising awareness among its customers of the importance of adopting machinery and technologies that respect the safety and health of operators.

BretonStone® plants, installed at the world's largest quartz slab manufacturers, are equipped with dust and styrene extraction as well as proper oxidation systems that make them 100 percent safe for workers and the environment, meeting even the most stringent regulations. These protections ensure a healthy and safe working environment for operators.

In addition, automated machinery used by those who process quartz slabs into finished products works with special water streams on the tools that break down processing dust.

Essentially, technological solutions for effective silicosis prevention already exist and are already almost universally adopted.

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The Breton Group

Breton, founded in 1963, has established itself on the global market thanks to its philosophy aimed at research and innovation; in its history, Breton has filed over 1700 patents.

It is the world leader in the design and production of systems for composite stone and natural stone.

It is a reference player in the design and production of machine tools for working metals and composite fibers in the automotive, energy, and aerospace sectors.

It is a technological leader in the design and production of machines for 3D large format “Additive Manufacturing”.

Breton has its headquarters in Italy, has seven foreign branches, and on average allocates the equivalent of around 5% of its turnover to research and development every year.

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