

# MSHA silica medical surveillance requirements

## Note

This information is for metal and nonmetal (MNM) mines only.

Compliance date for MNM mines is April 8, 2026.

## Introduction

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) is amending its existing standards to better protect miners against occupational exposure to respirable crystalline silica, a significant health hazard, and to improve respiratory protection for miners from exposure to airborne contaminants. MSHA's final rule includes requirements to protect miner health, including medical surveillance for metal and nonmetal (MNM) mines. Each operator of a MNM mine shall provide to each miner periodic medical examinations performed by a physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP) or \*\*specialist at no cost to the miner.

**\*\*A specialist means American Board-Certified Specialist in Pulmonary Disease or Occupational Medicine.**

## Summary of medical exam requirements

- Medical and work history with emphasis on past, present, and anticipated silica exposure, respiratory system dysfunction including signs and symptoms, history of tuberculosis, and smoking status/history.
- Physical exam with emphasis on the respiratory system.
- Single view chest x-ray (CXR) interpreted by a NIOSH certified B-reader.

**\*\* Referral to specialist if CXR identifies pneumoconiosis.**

- Pulmonary Function Test including FVC, FEV1m and FEV1/FVC by NIOSH certified spirometry tech.

**\*\* Referral to specialist if PFT indicates decreased lung function.**

## Timing of medical exams

### New to the mining industry:

**Mandatory medical exams** will be made available to each miner who begins work in the mining industry *for the first time* according to the following schedule:

- An Initial exam no later than 60 days after beginning employment.
- A follow-up exam no later than three years after the initial exam.
- A follow-up exam conducted by a specialist is required if the chest x-ray indicates pneumoconiosis, or the pulmonary function test (PFT) indicates decreased lung function. The exam must be completed no later than two years after the initial follow-up exam.

For additional information on the timing of mandatory medical exams:

- MSHA silica medical surveillance exam calculator ([saif.com/S1281](https://saif.com/S1281))
- MSHA silica medical examination timeline ([saif.com/S1280](https://saif.com/S1280))

### For all employed miners:

**Voluntary medical exams** will be made available to all employed miners.

- During an initial 12-month period and,
- At least every five years after the end of the 12-month period. The medical exam will be available during a six-month period that begins no less than 3.5 years and not more than 4.5 years from the end of the last six-month period. See example below:

***Example: First voluntary medical exam\* period ended June 1, 2024. Next medical examination\* would need to be available during a 6-month period beginning December 1, 2027 at the earliest, and December 1, 2028 at the latest. The December 1, 2028 6-month period (window) would end June 1, 2029, meeting the requirement of medical examinations\* at least every 5 years.***

For additional information on the timing of medical exams

- MSHA silica medical surveillance exam calculator ([saif.com/S1281](https://saif.com/S1281))
- MSHA silica medical examination timeline ([saif.com/S1280](https://saif.com/S1280))

### Medical examination results

Mine operators shall ensure the results of medical examinations/tests from PLHCP/ Specialist are provided to the miner within 30 days of the medical exam, and at the request of the miner, to the miner's physician or other designee identified by the miner.

Mine operators must ensure that the PLHCP or specialist sends results of the chest x-ray classification to the NIOSH reporting system-once created, within 30 days of the medical exam.

### Written medical opinion

Within 30 days of the exam, the mine operator shall obtain written medical opinion from PLHCP which includes only:

- Date of exam
- Statement that exam meets the requirements of the section.
- Any limitations in the miner's use of a respirator.

### Recordkeeping requirements and records retention

Written determination records and written medical opinion records must be retained for the duration of a miner's employment plus six months.

Upon request from an authorized representative of the Secretary, from an authorized representative of miners, or from miners, mine operators shall promptly provide access to the records listed above.

### What is the NIOSH reporting system?

Within 30 days of the medical exam, the MNM mine operator must ensure that the PLHCP or specialist provide the results of the chest x-ray classifications to NIOSH, once NIOSH establishes a reporting system.

When NIOSH establishes the system, NIOSH and MSHA will issue a joint notice to the mining community.