

**Republic of Turkey**  
**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
**Press and Public Relations Department**

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**USE OF SAND IN BLASTING DENIM IS BANNED**

There has been a widespread effort to prevent Silicosis in the world since 1932. Through the Global Action Plan (1995) that is being run by the World Health Organization and International Labour Organization, the goal is to decrease the frequency of the disease in all areas of industry by 2015, and to eradicate it completely by 2030. To this end, our Ministry has issued a Circular (2008/62) which calls for diagnosing Silicosis in its early stages as far as possible, and taking timely protective measures for those who work in places that present a risk. The Circular points out that there has been an increase in the number of Silicosis cases, especially amongst dental technicians, and workers who are involved in denim sandblasting.

Silicosis, which is one of the oldest known occupational diseases, is a disease of the lungs caused by crystalline silica small enough to be inhaled. Prevention measures for the disease, which progressively and irreversibly damages the lungs, is preventing exposure to the cause of the disease. The measures to be taken vary according to the cause of the exposure. In branches of industry where exposure cannot be prevented, there are measures in place against the source of the exposure and personal protection is used. Also, the people who work in these branches are subjected to regular health checks. In branches of industry where exposure can be prevented, less hazardous or non-hazardous materials are used instead of sand.

The process, known by a variety of names such as denim abrasion, denim sandblasting, denim sand-washing and "rodeo", is a process where sand (silica or quartz powder) is blasted to the surfaces of clothes through dry air compressors in order to give them a whitened and older look. Irrespective of its purpose, it is a known fact that during blasting, the free silica content of the colliding sand increases and remains in the air, where it may be inhaled for longer periods. Although the actual mechanism is not known, such newly-formed free silica particles are known to cause more damage to the lungs. That is why there are more fatal cases of Silicosis amongst those who work in sandblasting after a relatively short exposure period. Sandblasting was banned in several European Countries and in the US years ago.

The disease, against which there is no effective medical treatment, has become a social health problem in our country amongst denim sandblasting workers. In our effort to prevent Silicosis, which has been listed in the context of preventative health services for some time, our Ministry has investigated the **use of sand in blasting** through a scientific committee. All aspects in relation to health issues have been explored.

As a result of that study and taking into account the decision of the scientific committee, international treaties and our local regulations, the use any material that contains sand, silica powder and silica crystals (crystalline silica) for any type of denim clothing and fabrics is banned. Our citizens who have worked in this line of industry with no updated medical records will be examined in the medical institutions and organizations closest to them and those who are in need will be given immediate appropriate treatment.

Kindly provided for the attention of the public.

