US GOVERNMENT ROLE IN RECOGNIZING, REDUCING, AND REGULATING SILICA RISK: 80 YEARS AND COUNTING

Gregory R. Wagner, M.D.
Carpi, Italy
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The content and conclusions of this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
What can the US government do to recognize, reduce, and regulate silica risk?

What has the US government done?

Current status:
  - What hasn’t the government done?
  - Why (hasn’t it done what it hasn’t done)?
What can governments do to improve workplace health protections?

- Disseminate existing information and data
- Develop new information—actively gather and generate relevant data or support others who do
- Advocate for improved protections including in collaboration with stakeholders
- Provide incentives and
- Establish disincentives
  - Regulate, inspect, enforce, civil & criminal penalties, tax, compensation & benefits
- Ban (materials, processes)
Johannesburg International Conference on Silicosis, 1930

“The Conference...impressed all the delegates with the importance and urgency of finding effective means of preventing these diseases and has stimulated the belief that such a thing is possible.”

E.L. Middleton
Report on the International Conference on Silicosis
Our job is one of applying preventive techniques and principles to every known silica dust hazard in American industry. We know the methods of control – let us put them into practice.

Frances Perkins
U.S. Secretary of Labor
1933-1945
"Not infrequently we find ... dust exposures to be more injurious to the mechanical equipment than to the workmen."

from "Silicosis Is Not Threat to Workers' Health"
Science News Letter
November 30, 1946
"... the current opinion [is] that most of the cases of silicosis represent a residue of old cases."
