



For Immediate Release

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WATER MIST SAVES LIVES AT STONE CRUSHING MILLS

BUBENESWAR, INDIA – Many lives will be saved and thousands of cases of lung disease can be avoided if water misting is adopted by small-scale stone crushing mills throughout India, according to a study by partners Jeevan Rekha Parishad (JRP) (India), and Occupational Knowledge International (OK International) (U.S.).

The three-year study by JRP and OK International demonstrated that spraying a fine mist of water inside stone crushing mills greatly reduces disease-causing airborne silica dust, ensuring that workers would be much less likely to acquire silicosis and tuberculosis. This health benefit also extends to people in surrounding communities.

“This is a great benefit to everyone involved in this industry. We are encouraging widespread adoption of this simple and inexpensive control technology by stone crushers throughout India as it will have a positive public health impact.” said Perry Gottesfeld, Executive Director of OK International.

To date, the two organizations have successfully helped more than 40 mill owners in the Khurda District in the Indian State of Orissa to install specialized water spray systems. This equipment is readily available in the Indian market and can be installed without major costs or disruption to business.

JRP and OK International launched this demonstration project in 2005 in this area after discovering that workers there were exposed to an average of four times the permissible level of silica dust.

Their study, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the ERM Group Foundation, established that the addition of fine water mist dropped the average level of dangerous silica dust by a remarkable 82%. Their results were published in April in the International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health.

Currently, most stone crushing mills in India operate without any dust controls at all and the silica dust they generate has been linked to chronic lung disease and increased risk of tuberculosis.

In fact, a report conducted for the New Delhi Government by the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health at the Maulana Azad Medical College reported that 68% of workers at stone crushing mills have silicosis, silicotuberculosis, or tuberculosis.

“The stone crushing industry is growing rapidly throughout India, needlessly causing harmful diseases – but inexpensive water misting can save thousands of lives,” said M.R. Mishra, Director of JRP.

There are more than 500,000 stone crushing mills in India, mostly small-scale operations, providing raw materials to build roads and other projects in the booming construction industry.

M.R. Mishra, noted, “Our international partnership with OK International is unique as it shows that we can work with India’s small businesses to bring about big improvements and greatly reduce health impacts of this industry.”

"This project demonstrates that cooperation between our members and organizations such as JRP and OK International can improve our industry as well as the health of our workers." said Dr. Bipin Pattnaik, President of the Orissa Stone Crushers Federation.

The report recommends that bulk purchasers of crushed stone in India should encourage the widespread adoption of water-spray and other control technologies among stone crushers. Also institutions including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank should promote these controls for large infrastructure projects they are financing.

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