

## **CASE STUDY courtesy of Brian Robertson of Granite Tops UK**

Granite Tops UK produce and fabricate quartz and granite worktops to the kitchen industry. The manufacturing process creates RCS Dust.

After a visit by HSE in March 2020 and upon producing their latest air sampling report it was noted by HSE that they were above the WEL for exposure limits. A number of measures were in place at the time:

- All raw material were cut using water suppressing machinery.
- All worktops made from raw materials were processed on CNCs again utilising water suppressing machines.
- The hand polishing machines on the finishing lines were designated wet water machines.

At this time this was widely regarded as the pinnacle of wet processing. All manufacturers in the UK were reliant upon PPE as a last measure of defence against RCS. The HSE requested improvement on the industry's best efforts.

GTUK invested in their water treatment facility and upon the channel system gathering the water to be recycled (cleaner water through the machines meant less RCS being thrown into the atmosphere throughout the process).

The atmosphere (and water) was re-tested and the quality of the air and amount of RCS dropped considerably (the improvements were made over a 12 month period). HSE would not accept PPE as a last line of defence and again a plan was implemented to improve the exposure to RCS.

This time, GTUK approached an out-of-industry expert on extraction systems and a bespoke solution was sought. A system was agreed and installed in 2021 by COSHH services, an independent specialist H&S consultancy. The atmosphere was retested (March 2022) and GTUK reduced the amount of RCS to below the WELs. Testing was conducted by COSHH services and samples sent to an independent laboratory for analysis.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 the Worktop Fabricators Federation(WFF) held its quarterly meeting at their premises (The HSE attended), GTUK was chosen to showcase the efforts it went to in order to meets the governments WELs for RCS.

The attendees were from all quadrants of the industry from the world's leading suppliers of Quartz (Cosentino/Caesarstone) and manufacturers of worktops from the UK (including the largest producer PWS), Suppliers of the processing equipment (Bretton international) and suppliers of the sundries for machinery.

During the meeting the factory was being monitored using the industries latest RCS monitoring technology and at no point was above the WELs.

Whilst it is difficult to allow competitors on to site, GTUK believe that the bigger picture is more important and that includes getting the message across to everyone in the industry about the dangers of RCS and sharing best practices in controlling RCS dust.