

# NIOSH ALERT

## Preventing Organic Dust Toxic Syndrome

### WARNING!

**Agricultural workers who inhale contaminated organic dust can develop serious respiratory illness.**

Take the following steps to protect yourself from organic dust exposure:

- Be aware of the health effects of breathing organic dust. Symptoms of organic dust toxic syndrome (ODTS) occur 4 to 12 hours after exposure and may include fever, general weakness, headache, chills, body aches, cough, and shortness of breath.
- Inform your doctor about recent dust exposures when seeking treatment for respiratory illness.
- Carefully store agricultural products to minimize spoilage.
- Use automated or mechanized equipment to move decayed materials.
- Use engineering controls such as source containment, local exhaust ventilation, and wet methods of dust suppression to minimize exposure to organic dusts.
- When exposure to organic dust cannot be avoided, use appropriate respirators approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).



Worker wearing appropriate respiratory protection during exposure to potentially toxic organic dust.

For additional information, see NIOSH Alert: *Request for Assistance in Preventing Organic Dust Toxic Syndrome* [DHHS (NIOSH) 94-102], or call 1-800-35-NIOSH. Single copies of the Alert are available free from the following:

Publications Dissemination, DSDTT  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health  
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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
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and Health

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