

EPA Announces Start of National Lead-Safe Renovation Program to Protect Children and Pregnant Women EPA also strengthens protections in lead-safe program

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that renovations and repairs of pre-1978 housing must now be conducted using safe practices to protect children and pregnant women from exposure to lead-based paint. Almost a million children have elevated blood lead levels as a result of exposure to lead hazards, which can lead to lower intelligence, learning disabilities, and behavior issues. Adults exposed to lead hazards can suffer from high blood pressure and headaches. Children under six years old are most at risk.

“Our lead-safe program will protect children and families from lead-based paint hazards associated with renovation and repair activities in houses built before 1978,” said Steve Owens, assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. “This rule requires contractors to follow some simple and effective lead-safe work practices to prevent children’s exposure to dangerous levels of lead. Lead poisoning is completely preventable.”

EPA proposed the Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule, which requires contractors to be trained and certified in lead-safe work practices, in 2006. In 2008, EPA finalized the rule and set April 22, 2010 as the implementation date. To date, EPA has certified 204 training providers who have conducted more than 6,900 courses, training an estimated 160,000 people in the construction and remodeling industries to use lead-safe work practices.

EPA will continue to provide support and assistance to states, industry and communities on all aspects of implementing this rule. Recognizing the large number of contractors and homes subject to the rule, EPA is increasing its outreach efforts and providing guidance to facilitate compliance and ease the transition period following the rule’s effective date. This guidance can be obtained at: <http://www.epa.gov/lead>. EPA has an 800 number to respond to inquiries about the new requirements: 1-800-424-LEAD (5323).

In addition to the rule becoming effective, EPA has issued three additional actions:

- A final rule to apply lead-safe work practices to all pre-1978 homes, effectively closing an exemption that was created in 2008. The rule will become effective 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.
- A notice of proposed rulemaking to require dust-wipe testing after most renovations and provide the results of the testing to the owners and occupants of the building. For some of these renovations, the proposal would require that lead dust levels after the renovation be below the regulatory hazard standards. EPA will take comment on the proposal for 60 days. The agency expects to finalize the rule by July 2011.
- An advance notice of proposed rulemaking to announce EPA's intention to apply lead-safe work practices to renovations on public and commercial buildings. The advance notice also announces EPA's investigation into lead-based paint hazards that may be created by renovations on the interior of these public and commercial buildings. If EPA determines that lead-based paint hazards are created by interior renovations, EPA will propose regulations to address the hazards.

In addition, EPA is working with the Ad Council on a public-outreach campaign that will raise awareness among parents and caregivers of young children about the dangers of childhood lead poisoning from paint. EPA is jointly sponsoring the Ad Council campaign with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the non-profit Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning. The campaign has developed a series of public service announcements in English and Spanish for use in radio, TV and print publications.

The federal government banned lead-based paint from housing in 1978. If a home was built before 1978, there is a likelihood that it contains lead-based paint. The 2008 rule requires contractors working in pre-1978 housing and child-occupied facilities to take the proper precautions to work lead-safe, including minimizing dust, containing the work area, and conducting a thorough cleanup to reduce the potential exposure associated with disturbing lead-based paint.

More information on the rule: <http://www.epa.gov/lead>

More information on the lead outreach campaign: <http://www.leadfreekids.org>