

# A Guide to Working Safely with Residential Lead Paint

Some Basic Tips for

"Do-It-Yourselfers" and  
Residential Painting Contractors

- *Do you plan to sand and scrape painted surfaces?*
- *Was the house or apartment you are working on built before 1978?*

If you answered YES to both of these questions, your repainting project could release toxic lead dust.

*Prior to 1978, lead-based paint was applied to many homes, particularly on exterior surfaces but also frequently on the interior. Houses and apartments built before 1959 are even more likely to contain lead paint although it may be covered by layers of non-lead paint. When lead paint is dry-sanded or scraped, you can create toxic lead dust which is very dangerous and can poison residents, particularly young children.*

# Here are seven tips for working safely with lead paint:

- 1. Assume that all painted surfaces are coated with lead-based paint when working in homes built before 1978 unless you have had special lead testing done by a licensed lead paint inspector.**
- 2. Minimize and contain any dust and debris created by your work.**
  - Remove furniture and belongings from the work area or cover them with plastic sheeting.
  - Cover the floors or ground with plastic sheeting to capture dust and debris.
  - Turn off forced air heating and air conditioning ducts and cover them with plastic sheeting.
  - Keep children and family members out of the work area while work is in progress and before final clean-up.
  - Seal-off rooms or other sections when bigger jobs or projects could create a lot of dust and debris.
  - When feasible, wet mist any surfaces that will be sanded and scraped to limit dust.
  - Keep any dust and debris in the smallest possible area.
  - Place all dust, debris, plastic sheeting and other disposables in heavy-duty garbage bags and throw them away.
- 3. Avoid the following work practices, which can create or spread toxic lead dust.**
  - Machine sanding or grinding to remove paint.
  - Dry scraping or dry hand sanding more than 2ft<sup>2</sup> of a painted surface in a room, stairwell or hallway, or more than 20ft<sup>2</sup> of the exterior painted surfaces.
  - Using an open flame torch or high temperature heat gun (1100°F or higher) to remove paint
  - Using aggregate blasting equipment to remove paint.
- 4. Perform a thorough final clean-up by using a special vacuum equipped with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to remove dust and debris. Then wet clean using a detergent-based solution and clean water rinse.**

5. ***As a final precaution, test for lead contamination after completing your work.***
  - When bigger jobs or projects generate a lot of dust and debris, wait one hour for the dust to settle, and take two dust wipe samples from the floor in the work area or room. Then, submit them to a laboratory for analysis. If dust lead levels are less than 50 micrograms of lead per square foot ( $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$ )\*, the area has been properly cleansed and is ready for re-occupancy. If the dust levels are greater than  $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$ , then re-clean and re-test.
  - When working on the exterior, perform a visual examination of the ground in and near the work area for any visible paint chips or debris. Remove any chips and debris from the soil.
6. ***To protect yourself and your family, change clothes before leaving the work area, machine wash work clothes separately, shower after finishing work, and do not eat, drink or smoke in the work area.***
7. ***If you are not a "do-it-yourselfer," hire a qualified residential painting contractor who will follow these tips.***

## **Here are the basic tools and supplies you will need to work safely with lead paint:**

1. Non-permeable, puncture-resistant, disposable plastic sheeting
2. A roll of duct tape.
3. A razor or utility knife.
4. A double-sided bucket or two separate buckets.
5. A cotton wringer mop.
6. A roll of disposable hand towels.
7. Heavy-duty garbage bags.
8. Wet/dry sandpaper or a wet sanding block.
9. A wet misting bottle
10. A HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter-equipped vacuum.
11. A general purpose household detergent or cleansing agent.
12. A lead dust testing kit (wipes, wipe containers, gloves, template or a tape measure.)

*\* Proposed standard from EPA for lead dust levels on floors.*

# You too can protect children and other family members by following these basic tips

—It's simple and easy!!

*For more information on how to protect yourself and family members, contact the National Lead Information Center (NLIC) at (800)424-LEAD, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead), or your State agency.*

*For more information on how to work safely with lead paint or hire a qualified residential painting contractor, contact:*

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*Note: This guide is not intended to meet specific federal, state or local regulations nor does it guarantee that any or all lead hazards will be eliminated. Rather, it provides suggestions for reducing lead hazards when lead-based paint is disturbed during residential painting activities.*