



**National Center for
Healthy Housing**

Healthy Housing Connections



Healthy Housing Connections Spring 2009

Much has happened since our last newsletter: Congress allocated billions in funding for health and housing programs, including \$100 million for lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes, resulting in [53 grants in 21 states](#). Congress changed CDC's Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch name to the Healthy Homes Branch, providing clear political support for the transition to healthy homes. When Congressional leaders return from recess, we anticipate that the House will undertake major climate change legislation, which has significant implications for residential energy retrofits and, potentially, indoor air quality. We also expect Senator Reed to re-introduce his comprehensive Healthy Homes bill. At the state and local levels, communities are responding rapidly to the influx of federal resources. Many local officials have spearheaded efforts to ensure that stimulus funds for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program are implemented in ways that further healthy homes goals.

To harness the enthusiasm, resources, and critical need for cross-sectoral coordination, NCHH is excited to join the Alliance for Healthy Homes and an array of leading nonprofit organizations in convening the [National Healthy Housing Policy Summit](#). Over the last several years, we have identified the housing practices that result in demonstrable improvements in public health with greater certainty. During the Summit, we will join with national nonprofit leaders and experts to translate our knowledge into policy and practice. We believe that significant progress can be made by banding together with like-minded organizations. Together, we will identify new ways of working together to accelerate progress toward our goal of providing healthy housing for America's families.

I hope to see you there. Stay tuned for the results of this exciting event!

In this Issue:

National Healthy Housing Policy Summit

RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America Releases Recommendations Report

Ask NCHH

NCHH Unveils National Healthy Homes Training Calendar

The Relationship of Housing and Population Health: A 30-Year Retrospective Analysis

CDC Lead to Healthy Homes Name Change

Fitchburg Healthy Homes Summit

EPA Unveils Indoor airPlus

NCHH Flood Guide Available Online and in Print

Main Feature

National Healthy Housing Policy Summit

The [National Healthy Housing Policy Summit](#) will bring together leading organizations and experts in:

- Housing, public health, and environmental policy;
- Housing finance, construction, codes, rehabilitation, and management;
- Green building, energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and environmental health; and
- Tenant rights, homeownership, and community organizing.

The meeting will be held on May 7th from 8:30-4:00 at the National Association of Home Builders National Housing Center (1201 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005). No national meeting to date has brought together a "G-40" of leaders from an array of disciplines to focus on the best policies, programs, and practices to create healthier housing for America's families. The National Healthy Housing Policy Summit will "bust silos," build new bridges, strengthen relationships, and exchange new ideas.

The Summit is a collaboration of several partners, including the American Public Health Association, Enterprise Community Partners, LivingCities, NeighborWorks America, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and the National Environmental Health Association. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Kresge Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America generously provided funding support for the event.

We are honored to be joined by Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Joycelyn Elders and U.S. Senator Jack Reed. HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, and several other dignitaries have been invited to participate.

To register for the Summit, please [click here](#). Note that the deadline for registration is April 24, 2009. To view the program for the Summit, please [click here](#).

There are still several sponsorship opportunities available for the Summit. Please [click here](#), or call Phillip Dodge, NCHH's Marketing & Development Officer at 443.539.4168 to learn more.

Policy

RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America Releases Recommendations Report

On April 1, 2009, the [Robert Wood Johnson Commission to Build a Healthier America](#) released a report titled *[Beyond Health Care: New Directions to a Healthier America](#)*. The Commission found that how long and how well Americans live depends more on where individuals live, learn, work, and play than on their medical care. The report argues that the health of Americans will not improve unless individuals do more to incorporate health into all aspects of their everyday life and unless leaders do more in their decision-making to support healthier decisions in everything from education and child care to community planning and business practices.

Recommendations specific to healthy homes and healthy neighborhoods include:

- Develop a "health impact rating" for housing and infrastructure projects that reflects the projected effects on community health and provides incentives for projects that earn the rating. All homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods should be safe and free from health hazards. Communities should mobilize to correct severe physical deficiencies in housing, and health should be built into all efforts to

improve housing, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. New federal housing investments should be held accountable to demonstrate health impact.

- Create healthy community demonstrations to evaluate the effects of a full complement of health-promoting policies and programs. Demonstrations should integrate and develop successful models that can be widely implemented and that include multiple program approaches and sources of financial support. Each healthy community demonstration must bring together leaders and stakeholders from business, government, health care and nonprofit sectors to work together to plan, implement, and show the impact of the project on the health of the community.

Ask NCHH

Should I replace my aluminum wiring with copper?

Aluminum wiring is no longer used in housing electrical systems because it has been linked to fires. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), an estimated two million homes in the United States were built or renovated using electrical circuits with aluminum wiring. In particular, some homes built or renovated between 1965 and 1973 may have had aluminum wiring installed to feed branch circuits that run from the main electrical panel to the outlets and lighting fixtures.

The best way to determine whether a home has aluminum wiring is to hire a professional; however, a homeowner may be able to identify an aluminum-wired system by inspecting the cables running through the basement or attic to see if the cable is labeled “Aluminum” or “AL.”

If a home does have aluminum wiring, the CPSC recommends two actions:

1. Complete replacement of the system. However, at a cost \$8,000 or more, this may be too expensive for many homeowners.
2. Replace every connection in every outlet, switch, and junction box with a copper “pigtail” using a special “Copalum connection,” in which a short piece of copper wire is bonded to the aluminum wire using a tool designed specifically for the task. The copper wire makes the connection instead of the aluminum. It may be difficult to find an electrician to make a Copalum repair. Information about certified contractors is available through Tyco at 800.522.6752. Also, please see the [CPSC Aluminum Wiring Fact Sheet](#).

To see additional questions and answers or to ask a question of your own, please [Ask NCHH](#).

Training

NCHH Unveils National Healthy Homes Training Calendar

On April 22, NCHH will launch an [online training calendar](#) that will provide a comprehensive listing of healthy homes training in the U.S. It will focus on the following areas: Healthy Homes, Lead, Asbestos, Radon, Mold, Pest Control, Building Science, and Energy Efficiency. This is a free service for both participants and training providers.

NCHH's goal is to provide a centralized clearinghouse for training information, especially for contractors who need certified lead renovator training to prepare for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Renovation, Repair, and Painting Rule. NCHH is launching this effort in response to calls from trainers who said their greatest need is a way to get the word out about their training offerings in an efficient and effective manner.

Users will be able to conduct searches for all course offerings, courses in selected states, and/or by type of training (e.g., lead). The site will provide basic information regarding the course offering and a link to the training provider's website for more information.

Research

The Relationship of Housing and Population Health: A 30-Year Retrospective Analysis

Recently, NCHH completed an analysis of the relationship between health status and housing quality over time. We combined data from two nationally representative longitudinal surveys of the U.S. population and its housing, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and the American Housing Survey (AHS), respectively. We identified housing and health trends from approximately 1970 to 2000, after excluding those trends for which data were missing or where we found no plausible association or change in trend.

This is the first time in the United States that national representative data sets have been combined over a substantial time period. Some of the relationships identified through this investigation include the following:

- Trends in housing age (quality) and amenities track lead poisoning over time. Specifically, poorer housing conditions are associated with greater numbers of children with lead poisoning.
- Changes in heating and air conditioning systems and prevalence of broken windows and bars on windows track with the prevalence of asthma. Specifically, asthma has become more prevalent as more and more homes have central air conditioning and use forced air furnaces. Additionally, the number of people with asthma has grown as the percentage of homes with broken windows and windows with bars has increased.
- Air conditioning also tracks trends in obesity. Specifically, obesity rates have climbed as central air conditioning has become more commonplace.
- Cardiovascular health follows changes in proximity to open space, commercial and industrial facilities, noise, and neighborhood air quality. As the number of homes with poorer air quality, higher noise, and lack of proximity to open space has increased, so has the number of individuals with poor cardiovascular health.
- Lower income populations and some racial groups tended to live in poorer quality housing and their health outcomes were poorer than the general population. However, trends in health status and housing condition have remained much the same for these subpopulations and the general population. The failure to show improvements in housing and health disparities in low-income and minority racial and ethnic groups over the substantial time horizon highlights the need for new policy initiatives to address these disparities.

Environmental Health Perspectives published the results of the study and are available by [clicking here](#). It is important to note that because this was an ecological study, we looked at a population rather than an individual and drew conclusions on the relationship between housing variables (as reported in AHS) and health outcomes (as reported in NHANES).

News

CDC Lead to Healthy Homes Name Change

On March 12, Congress passed the FY09 Spending Bill. The [bill language](#) officially changed the name of the CDC Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch to the “CDC Healthy Homes Branch.”

Fitchburg Healthy Homes Summit

NCHH, EcoHealth Homes, and Fitchburg State University hosted *Healthy Homes, Healthy Families: A Summit for Municipal Leaders* in Fitchburg, MA on March 12, 2009. Speakers included Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong; NCHH Executive Director Rebecca Morley; Michelle Roberts of EcoHealth Homes; Mike Berry of Massachusetts Energy Star; and Eleanor White of Housing Partners, Inc. Event sponsors included [Healthy Housing Solutions](#), [NeighborWorks](#), [Massachusetts Energy Star](#), and [TD Wealth Management](#).

Please [click here](#) to read the event program. The event was attended by over 100 participants and was covered by the [Worcester Telegram](#) and in the [Green Building Blog](#) on www.bobvila.com.

EPA Unveils Indoor airPlus

Recently, EPA unveiled specifications for the “Indoor airPlus” new home label. Indoor airPlus was designed to help builders meet the demands of consumers looking for healthier and more energy-efficient homes. Indoor airPLUS builds upon the success of Energy Star for New Homes and is complementary to that program. Verification can be completed within the Energy Star inspection process, but must be conducted in accordance with Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) standards by a RESNET-accredited provider and meet all applicable codes. Instructions for Indoor airPLUS verification are included on the back page of the Verification Checklist. To learn more about this exciting program, please [click here](#).

NCHH Flood Guide Available Online and in Print

As flood and hurricane seasons approach, NCHH is issuing a reminder that a guide developed to help homeowners and contractors safely clean up homes damaged in hurricanes Rita and Katrina is available. [Creating a Healthy Home: A Field Guide for Clean-up of Flooded Homes](#) is a do-it-yourself booklet that provides easy, step-by-step instructions on how to handle mold removal in flooded homes before starting to rebuild or renovate. The guide is currently available as a PDF on NCHH’s website. Agencies working directly with individuals impacted by the floods may also receive a free shipment of printed booklets to distribute to those needing assistance. Please call NCHH at 877.312.3046 for more information.