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## **Editorial: A sluggish response**

### **EPA proposes rule for lead paint removal 10 years after deadline set by Congress**

When discussion turns to lead paint exposure these days, the likely assumption is that tainted toys from China are the culprits.

But an estimated 1.1 million U.S. children are exposed to lead paint found in older homes each year - a threat that still is greater than the potential for lead exposure from imported toys, pediatricians told USA Today in a story published Wednesday.

The use of lead-based paint was federally banned in 1978. But exposure still occurs when such paint is disturbed during renovations or repairs on homes built before 1978 - especially when contractors use an open-torch flame to burn the old paint off of the home's exterior or other surfaces, USA Today reports.

Construction industry officials say the method is among the most effective for removing old paint. But the flames can turn lead in the paint into a gas, which falls as lead-laden dust. When inhaled, these particles can cause kidney damage and nervous system damage, which can result in poor muscle control, learning disabilities and behavioral problems, especially in children.

In 1992 Congress ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to write a regulation for renovation contractors that included mandatory training in how to safely remove lead-based paint. The regulation was to be completed by 1996.

But the EPA did not propose the final rule until last year, USA Today reports. And it still hasn't been formally enacted. EPA officials said it took an extra 10 years because they decided that proposed regulations needed to be accompanied by outreach, education and training efforts, and those took time to compose. The EPA will now review public feedback on the proposed regulations, which it hopes to enact in 2008.

A spokeswoman for the National Center for Healthy Housing told USA Today that opposition from the construction industry is another reason the regulations have taken so long to finish. And the new proposal will do nothing to address work done by homeowners who undertake renovation projects themselves.

It is astonishing that, 14 years after Congress ordered new regulations for lead-based paint removal, such regulations still have not been put into effect. The EPA's plodding process shows an astonishing lack of urgency and lack of concern for the health of America's children.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/sun/2007/sep/04/566635855.html?sluggish%20response>