

Remodeling Homes Built Before 1978

New Laws Take Effect April 2010

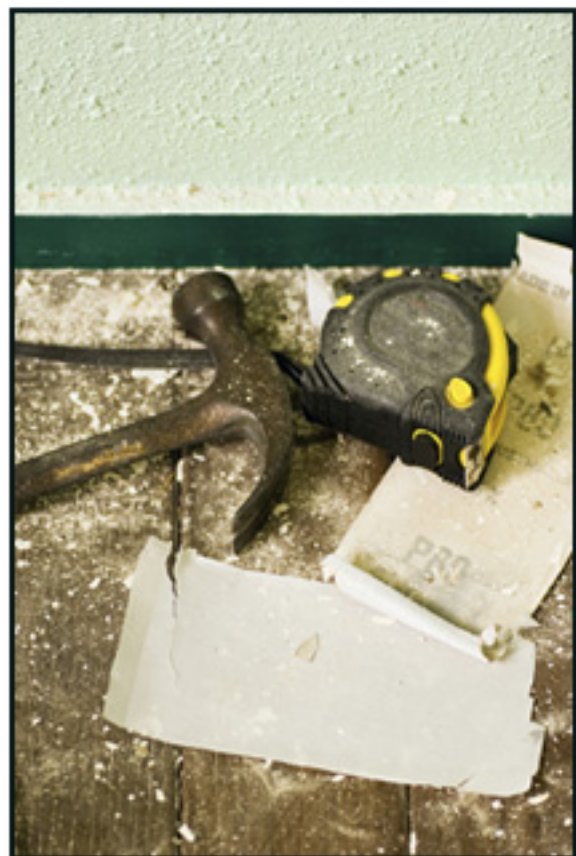
It's going to mean more training for contractors who want to "get the lead out," beginning in April of 2010. At that time, a modified federal law goes into effect, requiring contractors who perform renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes, child care facilities, and schools (built before 1978) to be certified. There are also specific work protocols and practices that must be followed to prevent lead contamination in these spaces.



Prior to the 1980's, lead was an ingredient commonly found in paint, added to the mixture because of its ability to produce vibrant color, dry faster, increase durability and resist moisture. Because of these properties, paint with high lead content may still be found in use in industrial applications and by the military. (For example, leaded paint is sometimes used to paint roadways and parking lot lines).

However, it is known that lead is a dangerous substance, and legislation continues to regulate its use and remediation.

In 1978, lead was banned for residential use in the United States by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Old, peeling lead paint remained on many structures painted prior to the 1978, and as a result, in 1991, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) characterized lead poisoning as the "number one environmental threat to the health of children in the United States."



Even though lead is banned in paint today, it may remain in a home or work environment in the form of dust or flakes, in interiors, soil around exteriors, or even in drinking water.

Because lead does not break down naturally it remains a problem until it is removed. That is where the professionals come in. Federal mandates, which take effect in mid 2010, require that lead paint removal is done by an individual or group certified in the safety techniques. Without taking proper precautions, contractors or other workers can unwittingly expose themselves and residents to serious health hazards.

Airborne lead enters the human body when people are exposed to lead particles in the air.

We can breathe or swallow them inadvertently. Thus, harmful exposures to lead can be created when lead-based paint is improperly removed from surfaces by dry scraping, sanding, or open-flame burning. These actions create lead dust. Removing lead improperly can increase the hazard by spreading even more lead dust around the house.

Obviously, it's a risk that needs to be eliminated. Since home test kits cannot detect small amounts of lead under all conditions, the safest approach is to hire a lead professional to test these surfaces. Some of the techniques a certified contractor is likely to employ to remove lead and lead dust include:

- Separating remodeling areas from living areas.
- Creating barriers using poly sheeting to keep lead dust from spreading to other parts of the home.
- Supplying an alternative ventilation system for the area, typically through use of an exhaust fan.
- Removing contaminated clothing and shoes before exiting the work area to avoid tracking lead dust into the living areas.

To become certified, contractors or others must submit an application for firm certification and fee payment to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Agency retains the right to approve or disapprove the application. The EPA's rules and lead-safe work practices can be found in the EPA's pamphlet on their website at www.epa.gov.

For the ambitious do-it-yourself homeowner working around lead-based paint, be aware of all federal, state and local laws regarding the removal of lead-based paint. New laws are created regularly and old laws are sometimes modified. The local health department is a good resource for current information regarding the removal of lead-based paint.