

New EPA Regulation Issued to Protect Children by Addressing Lead-Based Paint Hazards Caused During Renovation, Repair and Painting Activities

Children are exposed to lead primarily through lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust and soil found in facilities built before 1978. Common renovation activities such as sanding, cutting, painting, and demolition can create hazardous lead dust and chips by disturbing lead-based paint and other coatings, which can be harmful to adults and children.

Without proper precautions, disturbing the lead-based paint and coatings allows dust to settle on toys, windowsills and floors. Children can then easily swallow bits of dust and paint chips.

Today, childhood lead poisoning is considered to be the most preventable environmental disease of young children. Each year, approximately 1,000 children in North Carolina are exposed to dangerous levels of lead resulting in several hundred children with elevated blood lead levels.

Lead poisoning can affect nearly every system in the body. Lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, and it frequently goes unrecognized. The only way to test for lead poisoning is by asking your health care provider for a blood lead test.

To protect against this risk, on March 31, 2008, The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued the Lead; Renovation, Repair and Painting Program rule requiring the use of lead-safe work practices and other actions aimed at preventing lead poisoning.

The purpose of these requirements is to prevent the spread of lead dust from lead-based paint generated during renovation and remodeling jobs. The use of lead safe work practices to contain lead dust will help ensure a healthy living environment for children and families.

Under the rule, beginning in April 2010, firms and their contractors performing renovation, repair and painting activities that disturb lead-based paint and coatings in homes and child-occupied facilities built before 1978, must be certified, use trained workers and must follow specific work practices to prevent the creation of lead hazards.

A child-occupied facility means a building, or portion of a building, constructed prior to 1978, visited regularly by the same child, under 6 years of age, on at least two different days within any week (Sunday through Saturday period), provided that each day's visit lasts at least 3 hours and the combined weekly visits last at least 6 hours, and the combined annual visits last at least 60 hours. Child-occupied facilities may include, but are not limited to, day care centers, preschools and kindergarten classrooms.

The rule will affect paid renovators who work in pre-1978 housing (this includes single and multi-family housing) and child-occupied facilities, including but not limited to: renovation contractors, and maintenance workers, painters and other specialty trades.

This effort will also help ensure a healthy working environment for electricians, plumbers, painters, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and maintenance workers and other trade workers.

Currently, persons performing renovations for compensation in pre-1978 housing and child-occupied facilities must provide either the "Protect Your Family From Lead In Your Home" or the "Renovate Right: Important Lead Hazard Information for Families, Child Care Providers, and Schools" pamphlet to the owners and occupants before beginning renovation activities.

Beginning in December 2008, the rule requires that only the "Renovate Right: Important Lead Hazard Information for Families, Child Care Providers, and Schools" lead hazard information pamphlet be provided to owners and occupants of target housing and child-occupied facilities, and to the parents and guardians of children under age six that attend child-occupied facilities built prior to 1978.

To get a copy of the EPA pamphlets and regulation mentioned above go to the following web sites:

North Carolina Lead-based Paint Hazard Management Program Web site at <http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/lead/lhmp.html>, or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/lead/index.html>.

For more information about the EPA Lead; Renovation, Repair and Painting Program Rule call the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Health Hazards Control Unit (HHCU) at (919) 707-5950.