

How building departments can help prevent lead poisoning.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is looking to collaborate with building departments in promoting contractors' use of lead-safe work practices to reduce exposure to lead.

EPA published a final regulation, the Lead-Based Paint Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Rule, aimed at protecting the public from lead-based paint hazards associated with renovation, repair and painting activities. These activities can create hazardous lead dust when surfaces with lead paint, even from many decades ago, are disturbed. The RRP rule requires that firms performing renovation, repair, and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes, child care facilities and pre-schools built before 1978 have their firm certified by EPA (or an EPA authorized state), use certified renovators who are properly trained and use lead-safe work practices.

Protecting homeowners, tenants and contractors from Pb dust generated during renovation work is in everyone's best interest. Dust generated by relatively small areas of renovation, repair and painting in pre-1978 homes can not only poison those working on the project, but also the families that have hired the contractors, trusting that the work will be done safely. EPA is concerned that many homeowners and property owners are still unaware of the dangers of lead contaminated dust that renovations can generate and many contractors continue to not use lead-safe work practices.

There are multiple ways in which building departments can play a pivotal role in educating contractors in their communities about the importance of safely working with lead-based paint in renovation, repair and painting projects:

1. Providing pamphlets and other educational material on the RRP program in your offices and on your website;
2. Adding to your building permit application an acknowledgement of the requirement to follow RRP regulations while working in pre-1978 housing (this could be as simple as adding a check box or it can involve providing a statement for signature that the RRP regulations will be followed during the work);
3. Adding to your building permit applications a place where contractors must enter their RRP certification number;
4. Creating a local ordinance which would require contractors to be trained and certified for lead-safe renovation when working on pre-1978 housing prior to receiving a building permit.

In addition to benefitting homeowners and their families by reducing lead contaminated dust generated during renovations, this effort will also benefit contractors by providing a fair and level playing field. Building departments in EPA Region 5, the Great Lakes Region, the state of Minnesota and the city of Chicago have already created ordinances requiring contractors to be certified when working on pre-1978 housing prior to receiving a building permit.

It is important to note that EPA is not requesting that building codes be updated to include the lead-safe work practices from the EPA RRP regulation, nor is EPA asking code officials to enforce or interpret the

EPA RRP regulations. EPA is solely responsible for providing detailed guidance to contractors who are seeking training, certification or clarifications on when and how the RRP rule is applicable.

EPA is happy to work with you at whatever level of involvement you choose. Please take this opportunity to play a role in keeping our families and workers safe and contact your Regional EPA Office lead contact, which can be found at www.epa.gov/lead.