HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

WORKING WITH LEAD-PAINTED SURFACES

General guidelines for lead paint removal

If you are undertaking a repair that involves a painted surface, be aware of the dangers of lead-based paint. Lead from old paint can be released into the atmosphere either in dust produced by sanding the surface or as fumes from heating the surface.

Under some circumstances, encapsulating (sealing in) the lead-painted surface can be safer than trying to remove the old paint. If, however, you have decided to abate (remove) lead-containing paint from a surface of your house, here are some practical steps to follow to protect yourself from exposure:

THREE STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

1 CHOOSE THE SAFEST POSSIBLE METHOD OF REMOVAL

Contained high-pressure washing with water or wet scraping by hand are now considered to be the safest methods. Grit-blasting, power-sanding and burning the paint off are the most dangerous and these methods are banned. Although chemical strippers are themselves reasonably safe for removing leaded paint, provided all label precautions are followed, they do leave a tenacious residue of lead behind which must be sanded – requiring you to use one of the more dangerous methods of removal. Strippers containing methylene chloride should never be used.

2 WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Protect your body with a well-fitting respirator of the correct type. There are different cartridges to help protect you from lead-containing dust or leaded smoke fumes. Clean your respirator daily, and store it in a sanitary location where it won't get contaminated by lead dust.

Wear specific work clothes (Tyvek® coveralls work best), and change your clothes in a “clean” area where you can “de-dust” yourself before entering the house. There are also paper booties to wear over your footwear. Remove your work shoes, too, so you don't track dust inside. Wash clothing separately from the rest of the laundry.

3 PROTECT YOUR ENVIRONMENT

WHERE	WHAT TO DO
Outside	Use a complete covering of tarp to collect all fallen paint chips. (Don't wait until the chips come in contact with the ground to remove them.) Seal all chips within a plastic garbage bag for disposal. Clean up daily.

WHERE	WHAT TO DO
Inside	Use a tarp on all work areas. If you are working in a carpeted area, seal the carpet with heavy-gauge plastic, securely taped down all around. When you're done, dampen the dust (a plant mister will work) and vacuum it with a **HEPA** vacuum (High Efficiency Particulate Air); a regular house vacuum will only spread the dust around more. Empty the vacuum contents into a heavy-duty plastic garbage bag and seal completely. After vacuuming, wash all surfaces thoroughly with a high-phosphate detergent to remove the fine residue that remains.

RESPECT THE DANGER

Let common sense guide your choices when dealing with leaded paint. Since lead-laden dust is the most dangerous source of lead exposure, act responsibly to contain it. Keep children, pregnant women, and those who don't need to be there away. Respect the danger of this toxin.

IF YOU HIRE A CONTRACTOR

1. Discuss your safety concerns with the contractor before you agree to hire him or her, and include these concerns specifically in the contract. Remember, it's your home that may be contaminated with lead if it is not removed properly.
2. If your contractor or his/her employees are going to have access to your bathroom, spell out how they will remove leaded dust from themselves before they go through your home.
3. Include in the contract the details of daily clean-up and the responsibility for proper disposal of debris.
4. Find out how the contractor protects his or her workers from exposure to leaded dust.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

WWW.HRRC-CH.ORG **+1.216.381.6100** **2520 Noble Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121**

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