

Lead Overview

Lead is a naturally occurring soft and heavy metal. Over the years lead has been mined and used in many products that were found in and round our homes and buildings. Exposure to lead should be avoided since it highly toxic to humans, especially young children.

Lead used by humans can be traced back as far as 7000 years and was used for many purposes, including the creation of plumbing pipes by the ancient Romans. Lead in many household products has been banned or its use limited in many parts of the world over the last several decades. Despite these laws there are millions of homes and buildings across the nation that were constructed prior to these regulations.

The risk associated with lead comes from occupants inhaling, ingesting or drinking lead contaminated materials. In some circumstances if the lead has not been aerosolized, and is not chipping or flaking, there may be minimal risk to people. It is when lead containing products are disturbed or begin to decay that they typically pose the greatest risk to health.

Lead is typically impossible for occupants and building owners to detect using their normal senses. Affordable testing procedures are available by qualified professionals and accredited laboratories to demine in lead is present.

Lead Inspections

Lead inspections for residential and commercial properties have become a common occurrence to safeguard the health and well-being of occupants. These inspections are a small price to pay for protecting people from the irreversible threat that comes from lead poisoning.

Federal regulations placed a limit on the quantity of lead that could be used in residential paints beginning in 1978. The Federal Lead-Based Paint and Lead-Based Paint Hazards Disclosure Rule requires that a landlord or seller of a residential dwelling built prior to 1978 provide the buyer or renter with any available information on lead-based paints or lead-based paint hazards in your home and the pamphlet *Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home* (EPA/CPSC/HUD brochure).

The list of lead containing materials is extensive and can involve more than just paints on walls and trims, virtually any painted, stained, or varnished item has the potential to contain lead. In addition some homeowners may want to consider having their water tested for lead.

The main danger from lead comes from the ingestion of paint chips and inhalation of dust containing lead. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) there are an estimated 1/2 million children in the United States that have blood levels of lead high enough to cause irreversible damage to their health.

Hiring a Lead Inspector

A qualified lead inspector should be able to provide references and qualifications to the building owner or occupants.

During a lead inspection a surface-by-surface investigation will be performed to determine if lead is contained in the tested materials. A lead test may also be conducted in household dusts, exterior soils and household water.

If lead is discovered a written evaluation describing the locations, extent of contamination and recommendation for corrective actions should be given.

Depending on what the investigator discovers they may recommend the building owner hire a lead abatement contractor to remove or seal any lead that poses a threat to occupant health.

It is important when hiring a professional to conduct the inspection that only experienced and qualified professionals performed this important task. Be sure to also verify that any samples that are taken are to be analyzed by an accredited independent laboratory such as EMSL Analytical, Inc.

Resources

American Indoor Air Quality Council

www.iaqcouncil.org

California Indoor Air Quality Program

www.cal-iaq.org

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

www.cdc.gov/mold/

EMSL Analytical, Inc.

www.emsl.com

Indoor Air Quality Association

www.iaqa.org

LA Testing

www.LATesting.com

National Safety Council

www.nsc.org/library/facts/lead.htm

U.S. Department of Labor

www.osha.gov/SLTC/lead/index.html

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/

