

Lead: What You Should Know When Remodeling

By Mike Heslin, President of HBRA

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), lead from paint, dust and soil can be dangerous if not managed properly. Many houses built before 1978 have paint that contains lead.

Lead exposure can harm young children and babies-even before they are born. Breathing or swallowing lead dust or paint chips can be very harmful. The effects of lead in children, if not detected early, can lead to brain and nervous system damage, behavior and learning problems, slowed growth, hearing problems, and headaches. In adults, lead can cause difficult pregnancies, high blood pressure, digestive problems, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems, and muscle and joint pain.

If you're planning to remodel and the job will disturb painted surfaces, take precautions before you begin.

- Have the area tested for lead-based paint.
- Do not use a dry scraper, belt sander, propane torch, or heat gun to remove lead-based paint. These actions create large amounts of dust and fumes, which can stay in your home long after the remodeling is done.
- Temporarily move your family or completely seal off the work area if lead is present.
- Follow other safety measures to reduce lead hazards. Call 1 (800) 424-LEAD to receive the brochure "Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home."

Remodelers are required by law to give you the EPA pamphlet, "Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home" and have you sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the pamphlet. If your home does contain lead-based paint, ask your remodeler or (LOCAL REMODELERS COUNCIL) about how to find qualified lead abatement contractors in your area. For more information on lead, call the National Lead Information Center Clearinghouse at 1(800) 526-5456.