

# HAZARD ALERT

CPWR  
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# Lead Poisoning

## Protecting Yourself And Your Family



## Am I in danger?

You may be in danger of being exposed to lead if you perform the following tasks:

- ▶ Abrasive blasting
- ▶ Iron work
- ▶ Demolition
- ▶ Painting
- ▶ Paint removal
- ▶ Plumbing
- ▶ HVAC work
- ▶ Electrical work
- ▶ Lead-mortar work
- ▶ Renovation & remodeling

The U.S. banned the use of lead-containing paint in residential construction in 1978. However, you are still in danger if you demolish, maintain, or renovate a pre-1978 residential structure. Lead is still used in commercial and industrial paints - on bridges, railways, ships, lighthouses, and other steel structures.

### Lead dust can poison you, your co-workers, and your family.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) limits how much lead a worker can be exposed to.

## Why is lead dangerous?

Acute lead poisoning occurs after high exposures to lead over a short period of time. The first signs of severe poisoning can be an upset stomach (or cramps), weakness, pain in hands or feet, and/or being tired. Long-term exposure to lead can damage your kidneys, brain and nervous system, and cause blood problems, such as anemia.

The following are some other health problems that can result from lead exposure:

- ▶ Forgetfulness
- ▶ Reduced reaction time
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Poor concentration
- ▶ Impotence

**Talk to your doctor** about working around lead and your family's risk. Get your blood-lead level tested if you experience any of these symptoms.

\*Source: NIOSH. 2018. Health problems caused by lead.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/health.html>



## Protect yourself and your family...

Your family can get lead poisoning from lead dust carried home from work. **Children exposed to even a small amount of lead can suffer health problems,** including emotional changes and brain damage.\*

### Don't take lead home:

- ▶ **If you wear work clothes and boots home, store and wash them separately.** Remember, when lead is higher than the OSHA permissible exposure limit, your employer must provide protective clothing, a changing room, and laundry cleaning.
- ▶ **Clean your car or truck regularly.** Vacuum and wipe down hard surfaces.
- ▶ **Wash your face and hands** before you smoke, eat or drink. Shower before leaving work, if possible.

\*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. May 2017. What Do Parents Need to Know to Protect Their Children? [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/acclpp/blood\\_lead\\_levels.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/acclpp/blood_lead_levels.htm)

## If Lead is Present...

### 1 Get training

Several government agencies (EPA, HUD, and OSHA) require employers to train employees that may be exposed to lead at work. After training, follow all work requirements when working with lead-coated surfaces to prevent lead poisoning.

### 2 Control lead dust

Using vacuum attachments with power tools can prevent the lead dust from getting into the air, in your lungs, and on your clothing. Ventilation can be used to remove lead fumes created from hot work.

### 3 Wear PPE

Even a small amount of lead dust can hurt you. If you work around lead dust, wear a respirator and coveralls. **Minimum protection from lead dust begins with a half-face respirator with a P-100 filter.** When using chemical paint strippers, wear the PPE recommended on the label. Talk to your supervisor about the levels of lead in the air and make sure you are protected.

### To learn more visit:

- ▶ **OSHA's resource for lead**  
<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/lead/>
- ▶ **NIOSH - Workplace Safety & Health Topic: Lead** <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/workerinfo.html>
- ▶ **CDC - resource for lead**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/default.htm>



**If you think you are in danger:  
Contact your supervisor.  
Contact your union.  
Call OSHA  
1-800-321-OSHA**

**Find out more about construction hazards.**  
To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics:  
call **301-578-8500** or  
email **cpwr-r2p@cpwr.com**

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