

Renovating Right



Homes Built Before 1978 May Have Lead Paint

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned lead-based paints for residential use in 1978. Homes built before 1978 may have lead-based paint. When the paint peels and cracks, it releases lead dust and paint chips. Windows, doors, floors, porches, stairways, and cabinets may generate lead dust.

Keep Safe by Hiring a Certified Renovator

If you renovate, repair or paint a pre-1978 home, it can disturb lead paint. Be sure you hire an EPA Certified Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) firm. The EPA trains and accredits Certified Renovators. RRP certified firms follow lead-safe work practices. Using certified renovators lowers the risk of disturbing lead paint. You are protecting yourself and your family when you use a certified renovator. If you plan on doing the work yourself, it is still recommended to follow the RRP rules.

Consider Lead Testing

You should test for lead-based for all painted surfaces in pre-1978 constructed homes. If you don't test, you should assume your home contains lead-based paint. If you plan to do the work yourself, you should follow lead-safe work practices. Otherwise, hire a certified contractor for any RRP work.

Prevent Lead Exposure in the Worksite

Preventing lead exposure prevents lead poisoning. Lead poisoning is when a person's health or body functions are negatively affected by lead contamination in what they eat, drink, touch, or breathe. There is no safe level of lead a person can have. While there are many sources of lead, lead poisoning is 100% preventable.

Before You Begin, Move Your Family Out of the Worksite

Whether lead was tested or assumed to be present, keep people out of the worksite. Once complete, you should thoroughly clean the area. Keep the area off-limits to anyone not involved in the work.

Isolate the Work Area

- Use heavy-duty plastic sheeting and tape to cover:
 - floors
 - furniture
 - doors
 - windows
 - vents
- Turn off heating and air conditioning.
- Create a separate pathway so debris and dust aren't tracked to other areas.

Protect Yourself

- Always wear safety goggles, disposable coveralls, and shoe covers.
- Always wear a respirator equipped with a HEPA filter. Ordinary masks will not keep lead dust particles out of the lungs.

Minimize the Spread of Dust

- Use a spray water bottle to mist paint before sanding or scraping.
- Use minimal force when separating components like window frames.
- Score paint when separating components.
- Clean daily using a HEPA filter vacuum.
- Change out of work clothes when leaving the area. Wash clothes separately from other clothing. Shower after performing work activities.
- Avoid using techniques that produce lead dust like:
 - Sanding without HEPA local exhaust control,
 - Using heat guns at temperatures higher than 1100F,
 - Using paint strippers with methylene chloride,
 - Dry scraping, and
 - Pressure washing/sandblasting.



When the Job is Done

1. Mist debris with a spray water bottle.
2. Fold plastic sheeting inward to trap dust and paint chips.
3. Throw away in tightly sealed bags.
4. Wash all surfaces with soap and water.

Test areas like painted surfaces, shellac, varnish, stains, coating, and paint covered by wallpaper that may be disturbed during RRP work.