

Understanding EPA's Lead-Based Paint Dust Rule

Summary

EPA has finalized a rule that creates stronger requirements for identifying and cleaning up lead-based paint hazards in pre-1978 homes and childcare facilities. EPA estimates that this rule will reduce the lead exposure of up to nearly 1.2 million people every year, of which 178,000 to 326,000 are children under the age of six.

What are the health effects of lead exposure?

Lead can affect almost every organ and system in the human body. Lead exposure has the potential to impact individuals of all ages, but it is especially harmful to young children because the developing brain is particularly sensitive to environmental contaminants. In children, lead can cause delayed growth and development, lower IQ, learning problems, brain and nervous system damage, and hearing, speech, and behavior problems. If a pregnant person is exposed to lead, their developing baby can also be exposed. This can cause the baby to be born too early or too small, harm the baby's brain, kidneys, and nervous system, or cause the child to have learning or behavioral problems. In adults, lead exposure can affect the heart and kidneys, and may also cause cancer.

Where is there still lead-based paint?

Although the federal government banned lead-based paint for residential use in 1978, a [2021 analysis](#) estimated that 30.9 million pre-1978 houses still contain lead-based paint, and 3.8 million of them have one or more children under the age of six living there. Communities of color and lower-income communities are often at greater risk of lead exposure because deteriorated lead-based paint is more likely to be found in lower-income areas. Communities of color can also face greater risk of lead-based paint exposure due to the legacy of redlining, historic racial segregation in housing, and reduced access to environmentally safe and affordable housing.

How are lead-based paint hazards identified?

Lead-based paint is usually not a hazard if it is in good condition. However, deteriorating (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking, or damaged) lead-based paint is a hazard and needs prompt attention. Since the use of new lead paint was banned in 1978, any existing lead-based paint in these homes would be at least 47 years old, with some much older than that. While individual homeowners can choose to hire a [certified risk assessor](#) to tell them where any hazards are located, there are several typical reasons that a risk assessment could be performed to determine whether there is a lead paint hazard:

- Property owners, lead-based paint professionals, and government agencies may identify dust-lead hazards in residential and childcare facilities built before 1978 after learning that a child living there has a high blood lead level.
- People selling or renting housing built before 1978 must in most cases disclose any known lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards or hazard reports to the purchaser or lessee.

- Property owners who receive federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) must follow additional requirements for investigating potential lead hazards. For example, public housing authorities are required to test for and clean up lead-based paint hazards if the homes are undergoing major renovations. [Learn more.](#)
- Other local or state laws and regulations also require risk assessments to be performed on housing. For example, [Maryland State Law](#) requires that every time the tenant changes, the landlord must ensure that the Affected Property passes a risk reduction lead inspection (which includes passing a lead-contaminated dust test).

What does EPA's rule require if a lead-based paint hazard is found?

EPA's final rule recognizes that there is no safe level of lead in blood. The rule reduces the level of lead in dust that is considered hazardous, when found in homes or childcare facilities, to any reportable level measured by an EPA-recognized laboratory.

The rule also lowers the level of lead that can remain in dust on floors, window sills and window troughs after a lead paint abatement occurs to the following levels: **5 µg/ft²** on floors, **40 µg/ft²** on windows sills, and **100 µg/ft²** on window troughs. These are the lowest levels that can be reliably and quickly measured in laboratories, and reflect standards implemented in 2021 by [New York City](#). EPA recommends an abatement when dust-lead levels are above this threshold.

Other government entities, including HUD, state, local, Tribal or territorial government programs, may require lead paint abatements to be performed after a hazard is identified. Local laws might require a landlord to perform lead abatement if lead hazards are identified. For example, after January 1, 2025, [New York City's](#) Local Law 123 of 2023 will require building owners to clean up lead-based paint on door and window friction surfaces within three years of a child under six coming to reside in a unit with presumed lead-based paint.

EPA's Lead-Based Paint Activities Program requires individuals and firms performing an abatement to be certified and follow specific work practices. Following an abatement, testing must be performed to ensure dust-lead levels are below the new dust-lead action levels before the work can be considered complete.

Who must pay for cleanup of lead-based paint hazards?

If you own your home, you may be responsible for any cleanup you choose to pursue. If you live in housing funded by HUD, different rules may apply. In some cases, HUD or state, local, Tribal or territorial governments may require landlords or housing authorities to pay for lead abatement. If you rent housing that is not funded by HUD, local laws may require your landlord to pay for abatement.

In October 2024, [HUD announced](#) more than \$420 million in awards to remove lead hazards from homes, including HUD-assisted homes, ensuring the safety of children, residents, and families. This includes \$2 million to remove other housing-related hazards from homes in conjunction with

weatherization efforts, and nearly \$10 million to facilitate research on better identifying and controlling lead and other housing-related hazards.

Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

Call and speak with a specialist at the National Lead Information Center Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Eastern time (except federal holidays) at 1 (800) 424-LEAD [5323] or leave a message 24-hours a day, seven days a week.