

LONG VERSION

Headline:

If You're Not Lead-Safe Certified, Lead Paint Could Cost You Big Time.

Body Copy:

Think lead paint doesn't affect your business? Think again.

A new rule by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandates that all renovation and repair contractors working in pre-1978 homes, schools, and day care centers who disrupt more than six square feet of lead paint are required to become EPA Certified in lead-safe work practices. Contractors are required to take a one-day training course and firms must send a short application to the EPA. If not, they could face tens of thousands of dollars in fines in the future.

Steve Owens, Assistant Administrator of the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said there is a simple reason for the new rule: protecting people's health, especially children.

"Childhood lead poisoning is a preventable disease, and our goal is to eliminate it," said Steve Owens.

Many contractors think the issue of lead paint poisoning went away years ago, or that they are doing all that needs to be done to avoid it. But lead paint poisoning isn't just about eating paint chips, and even contractors who think they are doing a good job may not be working in a lead-safe manner. In fact, new research shows that contractors like plumbers, electricians, painters and window replacement experts can inadvertently expose children to harmful levels of lead from invisible dust disturbed during jobs they perform every day.

"The greatest risk is for young children living in homes during renovations," said Owens. "One study found they were 30% more likely to have unsafe levels of lead in their blood than kids in homes where renovations were not occurring. So it's very important that contractors learn how to work lead-safe and that families hire lead-safe certified contractors."

A pregnant woman exposed to lead can transfer lead to her fetus. The irreversible damages of lead poisoning can lead to a range of effects from memory loss and diminished motor skills to behavioral and learning disabilities.

Those who work on pre-1978 homes, apartments, schools, day care centers and other places where children spend time, from large and small contractors to building services professionals, will have to take the necessary steps to become lead-safe certified. Firms must register with the EPA and pay a fee. Individuals must take a one-day training course from an EPA-accredited training provider to become a certified renovator. Renovator training is also available via e-learning. This option allows trainers to provide much of the course content online, making it more convenient for many renovators. EPA certification is good for five years.

"Getting lead-safe certified is it the right thing to do for contractors, their customers, and their employees, and especially for the children who spend time near spaces that are being renovated," said Owens.

Steve Owens says that the EPA is mindful of the small added costs that may result from complying with this important rule. To that end, he said the EPA is launching a consumer campaign designed to raise awareness of the dangers of lead paint poisoning, and encourage consumers to choose only contractors who are Lead-Safe Certified.

For additional information including how your firm can get Lead-Safe Certified and where to find an EPA-accredited trainer in your area, visit epa.gov/getleadsafe or call 800-424-LEAD today.

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