



Office of Environmental Health and Safety  
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# SAFETY ALERT

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**No. 03-10: PREVENTING LEAD EXPOSURE DURING CONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION** **May 2003**

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Lead is a toxic metal and common component in older paints. The neurotoxic properties of lead are particularly damaging to young children, although lead poisoning can occur at any age. Potential lead exposures at the District are primarily due to ingestion of lead paint chips or inhalation of lead dust. All buildings constructed prior to 1993 are presumed to have used lead-based paint. When these coatings are disturbed by sanding or scraping, lead paint chips or dust may be released.

To minimize potential lead exposures resulting from building repairs or renovation, it is necessary that proper containment procedures be followed whenever painted surfaces are disturbed. Containment typically consists of placing 6 mil plastic sheeting on the ground extending at least 10 feet beyond the work area. Bushes or shrubbery in the work area should be covered as well, and access to the area restricted. Doors and windows adjacent to the work area should be sealed with plastic sheeting and duct tape, the air handling systems should be shut off and the fresh air intakes covered. If wind can blow dust or paint chips off the plastic sheeting, additional containment may be required.

After surfaces are prepared for painting, buildings are sometimes pressure washed with water to remove surface dust. If paint residue will be dislodged by pressure washing, all wash water and paint chips must be contained. The collected paint chips should be containerized and properly disposed of. The collected wash water should be tested to determine whether discharge to the ground surface or sewer system is permitted. In no event may wash water be discharged to the storm drain. If, at any time during the power washing operation, paint chip residues are observed, the process must be stopped until proper containment is provided.

Questions on these requirements, or other information related to the management of lead paint hazards in District schools may be referred to the Office of Environmental Health and Safety.

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