

LEAD-SAFE RENOVATION GUIDE (PRE-1978 HOMES)

Purpose: Homes built before 1978 may contain lead-based paint. Renovation work can create fine dust that is especially harmful to young children and pregnant women. This guide explains how lead-safe jobs are planned, how the work area is controlled, and what you can expect before, during, and after the project.

I. WHY LEAD SAFETY MATTERS

(Understanding the risk is the first step to staying safe.)

- Where Lead Comes From
 - Old layers of paint on:
 - Windows and trim
 - Doors and frames
 - Stair railings and balusters
 - Old cabinets, radiators, and exterior trim.
- Invisible Dust
 - Lead dust is often too small to see. Normal renovation activities like sanding, scraping, or demolition can spread it through the home if not controlled.
- Who Is Most at Risk
 - Children under 6 years old
 - Pregnant women
 - Pets that spend time on the floor or chew on wood or paint chips.
- Rules & Standards
 - The EPA Renovation, Repair & Painting (RRP) Rule requires special training, certification, and methods for disturbing painted surfaces in pre-1978 homes.

II. BEFORE WORK BEGINS

(Planning and preparation before the first dust is created.)

- Confirm Certification
 - Ask your contractor to confirm they are an EPA Lead-Safe Certified Firm and that workers on site are properly trained.
- Identify Risk Areas
 - Note any areas that may have original or very old paint:
 - Window frames
 - Door trim and baseboards
 - Old cabinets or built-ins.
 - These areas may require extra containment even if they are not the main project.

- Containment Plan
 - Discuss how the work area will be sealed:
 - Plastic sheeting on floors
 - Sealed doorways and vents
 - A designated entry/exit route.
- Family & Pets
 - Plan for children and pregnant women to stay out of work zones at all times.
 - Decide where pets will stay so they do not enter sealed areas.
- Home Prep
 - Remove loose items from walls and shelves in the work area.
 - Clear a pathway for workers and materials.
 - Secure valuables and important documents in another room.

III. DURING THE WORK

(What you may see and what “lead-safe” looks like in real life.)

- Sealed Work Zones
 - Work areas are isolated from the rest of the home with:
 - Plastic barriers
 - Taped doorways
 - Covered vents and floors.
- Safe Work Practices
 - Workers avoid:
 - Open-flame burning on painted surfaces
 - High-heat guns over recommended temperatures
 - Uncontrolled power sanding that spreads dust.
 - When scraping or sanding, surfaces are usually kept slightly damp to reduce airborne dust.
- Debris Management
 - Debris and trash should be:
 - Placed directly into sturdy bags or containers
 - Kept inside the containment zone until sealed
 - Carried out without being dragged through clean areas.
- What You Should Not Do
 - Do not enter sealed work zones unless instructed.
 - Do not sweep or vacuum with a regular household vacuum inside the containment area.
 - Do not remove plastic or open sealed doors while work is ongoing.

IV. CLEANING & CLEARANCE

(Safe re-entry requires thorough, deliberate cleaning.)

- Lead-Safe Cleaning Steps
 - After work is complete, the crew should:
 - Carefully bag and remove plastic sheeting and debris.

- HEPA vacuum all surfaces (floors, ledges, window sills) in the work area.
- Wet-wipe hard surfaces with appropriate cleaners.
- Visual Check
 - The work area should look:
 - Free of visible dust and debris
 - Free of stray paint chips or demolition scraps.
- Clearance Testing (When Recommended)
 - For some jobs, especially where children live in the home, clearance dust testing may be recommended or required:
 - A qualified professional collects dust samples.
 - A lab checks that lead levels are below regulatory limits.
- After the Crew Leaves
 - Continue normal cleaning with:
 - Damp mopping (not dry sweeping)
 - Wiping window sills and floors with disposable cloths as directed by your contractor.

V. YOUR ROLE AS THE HOMEOWNER

(Simple steps you can take to support a safe job.)

- Before Work
 - Inform the contractor if:
 - Children under 6 or pregnant women live in the home
 - Anyone has known lead-related health concerns.
 - Follow instructions for clearing rooms and protecting belongings.
- During Work
 - Keep children and pets away from work areas.
 - Use alternate routes through the home if possible.
 - Reach out if you see torn plastic barriers or unusual dust outside the work zone.
- After Work
 - Follow any special cleaning tips provided for your home.
 - Keep records of:
 - Contractor's lead-safe certification
 - Scope of work
 - Dates of renovation.

VI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Do I need to move out during lead-safe work?
Usually not, but you may need to avoid certain rooms or floors while work is active. For very large jobs, temporary relocation may be recommended.
- Can I still use other parts of my home?
Yes, as long as work areas are properly sealed and you avoid entering them.

- Is regular vacuuming enough after the job?

No. Standard vacuums can spread fine lead dust. Post-work cleaning should always start with HEPA vacuuming and wet-wiping.

- Who can I contact for more information?

Talk to your contractor and review official EPA Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) resources for detailed regulations.

Disclaimer: This guide summarizes general concepts from lead-safe renovation practices but is not a substitute for official regulations, testing, or professional training. Always work with EPA Lead-Safe Certified contractors, follow local regulations, and consult health professionals if you have concerns about lead exposure.

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