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Agency

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Testing Your Home for Lead

in Paint, Dust, and Soil

Preface

About This Publication

This publication is for anyone who is considering having a home or residence tested for lead in paint, dust, or soil by a professional. It explains the technical aspects of lead testing without overwhelming the reader. Thus, commonly-asked questions are presented in logical order. The first section tells why you would test for lead, the approaches for testing for lead, and what information you will get from each approach. The second section answers specific questions about how paint, soil, and dust sampling are conducted by the professional in your home. Finally, the last section answers other questions about testing, including questions about home test kits and testing of water and ceramics.

Important:

This publication addresses federal regulations and guidelines. Your state may have its own lead program and different regulations. You can find out by calling the National Lead Information Center: ***1-800-424-LEAD.***

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Section 1

General Questions

About Testing Procedures

Q: *Why Should I Test My Home For Lead?*

A: There are numerous reasons why you might want to test your home for lead, especially if built before 1978:

I. There are (or will be) children age 6 and younger in the home.

Lead from paint, especially peeling or flaking paint, can get into dust and soil in and around a home. Young children may then swallow the lead during normal hand-to-mouth activity. In addition, an unborn child may be exposed to lead in the mother's womb. High levels of lead in the fetus and in children age 6 and younger have been linked to nervous system damage, behavior and learning problems, and slow growth. Testing can tell you whether there is lead-based paint or a lead hazard in your home.

II. You are about to remodel, renovate or repaint your home.

Any disturbance of lead-based paint can create a hazard by depositing lead chips or particles in the house dust or in the soil around the house. If you are planning on doing renovation, remodeling, or repainting, you should have testing done by a certified lead professional on any painted surfaces that will be removed, disturbed, scraped or sanded before starting the work. The EPA brochure *Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home* (see page 15) provides guidelines for renovating or remodeling your home.

III. You are a renter or buying a home.

The new Federal Lead-Based Paint and Lead-Based Paint Hazards Disclosure Rule requires that the landlord or seller of a residential dwelling built prior to 1978 provide the renter or buyer with:

- The pamphlet *Protect Your Family From Lead In Your Home*, and
- Any available information on lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards in the home.

A buyer must be given the opportunity to conduct testing to determine whether lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards are present. While you are not required by law to test for lead, it may be advisable if you have (or plan to have) young children in the home.

IV. You are a landlord or selling a home.

As discussed above, a homeowner is required to provide renters or buyers with any available information on lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards in homes built before 1978. Testing will give you the information that may be requested by potential renters or buyers.

Q: *Why is Testing Recommended For Houses Built Before 1978?*

A: Federal regulations placed a limit on the amount of lead in paint sold for residential use starting in 1978. That is why homes built before 1978 are subject to the Disclosure Rule. The older the home, the greater the chance of lead-based paint and lead hazards, and the more important it is to have the home tested.

Q: *What Kind Of Testing Do I Want?*

A: Three different approaches for testing lead are available: a lead-based paint inspection, a risk assessment, and a lead hazard screen. A combination inspection and risk assessment may also be done. Selection of the approach depends on why you are testing.

I. Lead-Based Paint Inspection

A lead-based paint *inspection* is a surface-by-surface investigation to determine whether there is lead-based paint in the home and where it is located.

An inspection includes:

- An inventory of all painted surfaces, including the outside as well as inside of the home. 'Painted surfaces' include all surfaces coated with paint, shellac, varnish, stain, coating or even paint covered by wall paper.
- Selection and testing of each type of painted surface.

Then you should get a report listing the painted surfaces in the home and whether each painted surface contains lead-based paint.

An inspection does not typically test painted furniture unless it is a permanent part of the home, such as kitchen or bathroom cabinets or built-in bookshelves. Soil, dust, and water are not typically tested during an inspection.

The presence of lead-based paint in a home does not necessarily mean there is a hazard to occupants. To make sure, you may want a different testing approach (either a risk assessment or hazard screen).

Typical painted surfaces tested during an inspection:			
Inside the home		Outside the home	
Baseboards	Heating units	Chimneys	Mail boxes
Built-in cabinets	Railings	Door trim	Porches
Ceilings	Shelves	Fascia, soffits	Roofing
Chair rails	Stairs	Fences	Siding
Doors	Walls	Gutters, downspouts	Stairs
Fireplaces	Windows	Handrails	Sheds
Floors		Lattice work	Swing sets

II. Risk Assessment

A *risk assessment* is an on-site investigation to determine the presence, type, severity and location of lead-based paint *hazards*. The presence of deteriorated lead-based paint or high levels of lead in dust or soil pose potential hazards to children who may ingest lead inside or playing outside.

A risk assessment includes:

- A visual inspection of the residence to determine the location of deteriorated paint, the extent and causes of the deterioration, and other factors that may cause lead exposure to young children inside or outside the home.
- Testing deteriorated paint and paint on surfaces where there is reason to believe (from teeth marks or from reports of a parent) that a child has chewed, licked or mouthed the paint. Painted surfaces in good condition are not tested.
- Testing household dust from floors and windows. Samples should include areas from a child's bedroom, a child's main play area, the main entrance, and other locations to be chosen by the Risk Assessor.
- Testing bare soil from play areas, the building foundation and possibly other areas around the home.
- Water testing is optional.

Finally, you should get a report identifying the location of the types of lead-based paint hazards and ways to control them. Because not all paint is tested, a risk assessment cannot conclude that there is no lead-based paint in the home.

An important point is that a risk assessment identifies current hazards. New hazards may arise if lead-based paint is disturbed, damaged, or deteriorates.

If you want to know which painted surfaces contain lead-based paint and whether any lead-based hazards are present, you will need a combination ***inspection and risk assessment.***

III. Lead Hazard Screen

A *lead hazard screen* is a limited version of a risk assessment:

- Any painted surfaces in a deteriorated condition are tested.
- Two sets of dust samples are collected in a lead hazard screen. One set represents the floors and the other set represents the windows. Typically, there is less dust sampling in a lead hazard screen than in a risk assessment.
- Usually soil samples are not collected in a lead hazard screen, with one exception. If there is evidence of paint chips in the soil from previous exterior repainting, then the soil should be sampled and tested.

The outcome of the lead hazard screen is either:

- A conclusion that lead-based paint hazards are probably not present, or
- A recommendation that a full risk assessment be conducted to determine if such hazards are present.

In a lead hazard screen, only deteriorated paint is tested. Thus, a lead hazard screen cannot conclude there is no lead-based paint in the home.

A lead hazard screen is only recommended for residences that are generally in good condition, with little visible dust, and with paint in good condition (very little chipping or flaking). If not, the screen is likely to be a waste of time and money. In general, a lead hazard screen will be more useful in housing built after 1960.

As with a risk assessment, a lead hazard screen identifies current hazards. If there is lead-based paint in the home, new hazards may arise if that paint is disturbed, damaged, or deteriorates.

Q: *Who Can Do Lead Testing For Me?*

A: It is strongly recommended that testing be performed by a certified Inspector or Risk Assessor.

- *Inspectors* can perform only lead-based paint inspections.
- *Risk Assessors* can perform both risk assessments and lead hazard screens. A person who is both an Inspector and a Risk Assessor may also do a combination of an inspection and a risk assessment.

Many states have requirements that Inspectors and Risk Assessors be certified by the state. If yours does, be sure to hire a state-certified professional.

If your state does not have a certification program, try to hire someone who is certified in another state.

If you cannot find someone with a state certification, check with the local public health department for a list of qualified Inspectors and Risk Assessors.

If there is no public health department list covering your area, try to hire an individual who

has completed an EPA model course for Inspector and/or Risk Assessor. He or she will have a certificate documenting course completion.

The EPA pamphlet *Finding a Qualified Lead Professional For Your Home* provides guidelines for checking a professional's background and experience. See page 15 for details on ordering informational materials.

A nationwide list of trained lead professionals, referred to as the Lead Listing, can be accessed through the Internet at: **www.leadlisting.org.** A state list can be obtained by calling **1-888-532-3547.**

Q: *What Will The Testing Report Tell Me?*

A: That will depend on which approach has been used: inspection, risk assessment, or lead hazard screen. Request a sample report before the testing is done so that you may see what information will be provided and how it will be presented. You should also request that actual lead values be provided in the report (not just 'positive' or 'negative' classifications).

I. Inspection report

If you have an inspection done, you should receive a report that tells you which painted surfaces were tested and the test results for each surface. An inspection report will not tell you the condition of the lead-based paint or whether hazards exist.

II. Risk assessment report

If you have a risk assessment done, you will receive a report that tells you whether there are any lead-based paint hazards, and recommends ways to reduce or control any hazards present.

The Risk Assessor will take into account the test results and the results of the visual inspection to decide if there are any lead hazards and how to control them. Lead-based paint hazards identified include lead-based paint in deteriorated condition or on surfaces mouthed by a child. In addition, house dust or bare soil with hazardous lead levels will be identified. Refer to the EPA Fact Sheet *Identifying Lead Hazards in Your Home* as a way to understand the report of the Risk Assessor.

The Risk Assessor will provide a list of options for controlling each hazard. Options may include both interim controls and abatement.

- *Interim actions* - These are short term or temporary actions. Examples include recommendations to repair deteriorated surfaces that contain lead-based paint, to clean house dust more frequently, or to plant grass or shrubs in areas with bare soil.

- *Abatement* - These are long term or permanent actions. Examples include replacing old windows, building a new wall over an existing one, or removing soil.

The Risk Assessor will also identify the probable source of the paint deterioration and determine whether other repairs are warranted. For example, a water leak may need to be repaired to prevent further damage to the paint.

III. Hazard screen report

If you have a lead hazard screen done, the report tells you that there are probably no lead-based paint hazards in the house, or that full-scale risk assessment is needed.

Q: *Do I Have To Do Anything After The Testing Is Completed?*

A: There is no EPA requirement for you to do anything to any lead-based paint or lead hazards found when testing your home. However, if your home was built before 1978, you will be required to provide the test results to any renter or buyer when you lease or sell the home. The EPA and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fact Sheet *Disclosure of Lead-Based Paint Hazards in Housing* explains the responsibilities of sellers, landlords, and their agents when selling or leasing a home.

Be aware that there may be state or other requirements for action based on the test results. You can call the National Lead Information Center at **1-800-424-LEAD** for information about what is required in your locality before you start testing.

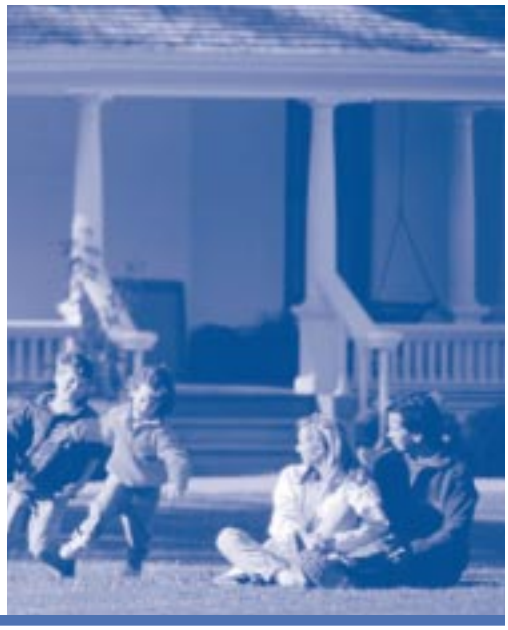
If you decide to abate lead hazards, it is not recommended that you do the work yourself. Abatement activities must be done following careful procedures to prevent contamination of the home with lead dust. To be safe, hire a professional lead-based paint contractor (a professional who can do lead-based paint related abatement). Dust samples should be collected to check the thoroughness of the work.

Note that you are not under any obligation to hire the same firm that did the testing. In fact, it would be better to have one firm conduct all testing and another firm conduct the abatement work. That will prevent a conflict of interest.

Be sure to maintain a record of the work to help during any future sale or rental of the home.

Section 2

Specific Questions
About Testing Paint, Dust and Soil



Q: *Are All Painted Surfaces In The Home Tested?*

A: Not every single painted surface in the home will be tested, but all types of painted surfaces are tested. For example, a room may have three windows, all painted the same color and all made out of wood. The Inspector may not test all three windows, because they appear to be the same.

In a similar fashion, the Inspector will go through every room and test the different types of painted surfaces in the rooms. Painted surfaces on the outside of the home, detached structures (such as garages), and items like painted fences and swingsets should also be tested.

Inspections differ from risk assessments and lead hazard screens. In a risk assessment, only deteriorated paint and paint that has been mouthed or chewed by a child will be tested. In a lead hazard screen, only deteriorated paint is tested.

Q: *How Are Painted Surfaces Tested?*

A: There are currently two methods recognized by EPA for testing paint: portable X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzers and paint chip sampling followed by analysis by a laboratory recognized by EPA.

I. Portable X-Ray Fluorescence Analyzers (XRFs)

A portable XRF measures lead in paint, generally without damaging the paint. However, readings from some XRFs are affected by the base material (known as the "substrate") underneath the paint, such as wood, plaster, or metal. For these cases, the Inspector removes paint from a few surfaces of each type and takes a measurement on the unpainted surface. These measurements provide a baseline to adjust the lead in paint value. This procedure may do some paint damage. Also, for curved surfaces or very deteriorated paint, XRF analyzers may not read accurately and a paint chip sample may be required.

When a qualified lead-based paint professional follows good testing practices, XRF analyzers provide a fast and reliable method for classifying many painted surfaces. However, some XRF test results may be inconclusive (neither positive nor negative). Then laboratory testing of a paint chip sample may be necessary.

Because the XRF analyzer uses a radiation source to detect lead, occupants in the household may be asked to stay out of rooms behind the surfaces being tested.

II. Paint Chip Sampling and Laboratory Analysis

Paint chip samples are collected for laboratory analysis by removing one to four square inches of paint from the surface. All layers of paint in the sampled area are included in the sample. Usually samples will contain some of the material beneath the paint, such as wood, plaster, or concrete particles. The amount of this material will be kept to a minimum.

Tools such as chisels and scrapers are used to remove the paint. Sometimes a heat gun is used to soften the paint and make the removal easier. If so, a respirator should be worn by the person operating the heat gun for protection from lead and other fumes. In addition, the room or area should be well ventilated to protect occupants.

After collecting the paint chip sample, the professional will repair the scraped area so that adjacent paint will not peel or flake off. Any paint chips or dust from the sampling should be cleaned up by the professional to ensure no lead dust is left behind.

Paint chip samples should be analyzed for lead by a laboratory recognized by EPA as proficient for testing lead in paint. EPA has established the National Lead Laboratory Accreditation Program (NLLAP) to ensure that laboratory analyses are done accurately. A laboratory on the list is recognized as proficient for testing for lead in whichever of the three sample types (paint, dust, or soil) the laboratory has qualified. Be sure that any paint chip samples from your home are analyzed by a laboratory on the NLLAP list for paint. A current list of NLLAP (EPA recognized) laboratories can be obtained by calling **1-800-424-LEAD**.

While paint chip sampling followed by laboratory analysis is generally more accurate than XRF testing, sampling and analysis take longer to complete and paint chips must be scraped from many surfaces in the home. In some cases, a surface may be curved or so deteriorated that an XRF cannot be used properly, and sampling may be the only way to test the paint.

Q: *What Do The Results of Paint Testing Mean?*

A: A qualified professional will use guidance specific for each type of XRF analyzer to determine whether a measurement indicates that:

- Lead-based paint is present,
- Lead-based paint is not present, or
- The measurement is inconclusive and a laboratory test is necessary.

The guidance ensures the XRF measurement classifies paint as lead-based when there is 1.0 milligram of lead per square centimeter of painted surface or greater (1 mg/cm^2). An XRF analyzer typically reads in mg/cm^2, meaning milligrams per square centimeter.

When the paint chip sampling followed by laboratory analysis method is used, the federal definition of lead-based paint is dependent on how the results are reported.

- If the laboratory report is expressed as weight of lead per weight of paint chip, the federal definition of lead-based paint is 0.5 percent lead (0.5%). This is mathematically the same as 5,000 milligrams of lead per kilogram of paint chip (5,000 mg/kg), or 5,000 micrograms of lead per gram of paint chip (5,000 µg/g), or 5,000 parts per million lead (5,000 ppm).
- If the laboratory report is expressed as a weight of lead per unit area of painted surface, the federal definition of lead-based paint is 1.0 mg/cm^2 (the same as for XRF analysis).

It is possible to report laboratory results in both types of units, but this is rarely done because of the additional time and work required.

Federal definition of lead-based paint depends on how test results are reported	
How Test Results are Reported	Federal Definition of Lead-Based Paint
If results are reported as percent (or equivalent)	Paint has greater than or equal to 0.5% (or 5,000 µg/g or 5,000 mg/kg or 5,000 ppm) lead
If results are reported as milligrams per square centimeter	Paint has greater than or equal to 1mg/cm^2 lead

Unfortunately, there is no universal definition of lead-based paint. Some state and local governments have definitions of lead-based paint which differ from those in federal law. It is recommended that when there is a conflict between the federal definition and a state or local definition, the more stringent standard (that is, the lower number) be used to define lead-based paint. A qualified lead-based paint professional (Inspector or Risk Assessor) will be aware of and will follow the appropriate standard.

Q: *What If No Lead-Based Paint Is Found In My Home?*

A: Lead can still be present in paint which is not classified as "lead-based." This would occur when the paint has a lower amount of lead than the federal government regulates (see "What Do The Results Of Paint Testing Mean?"). If lead is present in the paint, lead dust can be released when the paint deteriorates, or is disturbed during remodeling, renovation, sanding, or some maintenance work that breaks the surface of the paint. This is especially important in homes built before 1978. Since the amount of lead in paint was limited by federal regulation in 1978, lead exposure during remodeling and renovation is not as much a concern in newer homes.

The EPA brochure *Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home* provides guidelines for renovation and remodeling your home. See page 15 for more information on how to order the brochure.

Q: *How Are Dust Samples Collected And Analyzed?*

A: The most common method for dust collection is a surface wipe sample. Most Risk Assessors will use baby wipes or wet wipes to collect dust.

If dust is collected from a floor, an area of one square foot is usually sampled. The area is wiped several times in different directions to pick up all the dust. After sampling, the wipe is placed in a container and sent to a laboratory for analysis. The Risk Assessor will also collect wipe samples from windows and measure the surface area wiped.

In some situations, special types of vacuum samplers may be used for dust collection. These are different from home vacuum cleaners, although some may look the same. There are currently no federal standards for dust samples collected with vacuum techniques.

The lead-based paint professional should send dust samples to an NLLAP (EPA recognized) laboratory that is proficient for dust analysis. (A current list of NLLAP laboratories can be obtained by calling **1-800-424-LEAD**.)

Q: *What Do The Results Of Dust Sampling Mean?*

A: Dust sample results are usually expressed as a weight of lead per unit area of surface. The units will usually be micrograms of lead per square foot. For example, a floor wipe sample may be expressed as 50 micrograms of lead per square foot. This is written as 50 $\mu g/ft^2$.

The lead-based paint professional will provide guidance in interpreting the results of the dust testing. Federal guidelines for acceptable dust lead levels are discussed in the EPA Fact Sheet *Identifying Lead Hazards In Your Home*. See page 15 for details on ordering information.

Q: *How Are Soil Samples Collected And Analyzed?*

A: Soil samples are collected from bare soil areas (soil with no grass or other covering) near your home where children play and from bare soil areas near the house foundation or dripline. Optional sampling areas are gardens, pathways, and pet sleeping areas. Samples are collected by coring or scooping methods that take the top half-inch of soil. Samples of non-bare soil may sometimes be collected.

Soil samples should be sent to an NLLAP (EPA recognized) laboratory that is proficient in soil analysis. (A current list of NLLAP laboratories can be obtained by calling **1-800-424-LEAD**.)

Q: *What Do The Results Of Soil Testing Mean?*

A: Results of soil samples are expressed as a weight of lead per unit weight of soil, usually in parts per million. For example, a soil sample result may be 300 parts per million. This is written 300 ppm.

The lead-based paint professional will help you interpret the results of the soil testing. Federal guidelines for acceptable soil lead levels are discussed in the EPA Fact Sheet, *Identifying Lead Hazards In Your Home.* See page 15 for details on ordering informational materials.

Q: *What Are Composite Samples?*

A: Composite samples are combinations of individual samples analyzed together in a laboratory to obtain a single average result. Both dust and soil samples may be composited. For example, a floor dust sample may be collected in each of three rooms and combined to obtain one composite dust sample to be analyzed by the laboratory. Or, four soil samples taken in a play area may be combined to obtain one composite soil sample. Paint samples may also be composited, but this is not as common as compositing dust and soil samples.

Composite samples may often be used in risk assessments and lead hazard screens to reduce the cost of laboratory analysis, or to increase the representativeness of a single sample. The disadvantage of composite samples is that information is not available for each room (or location) from which samples were collected.

The Risk Assessor will interpret composite sample results, if any. The advantage of composite samples is that information is obtained at reduced cost, or more samples are collected for the same cost.

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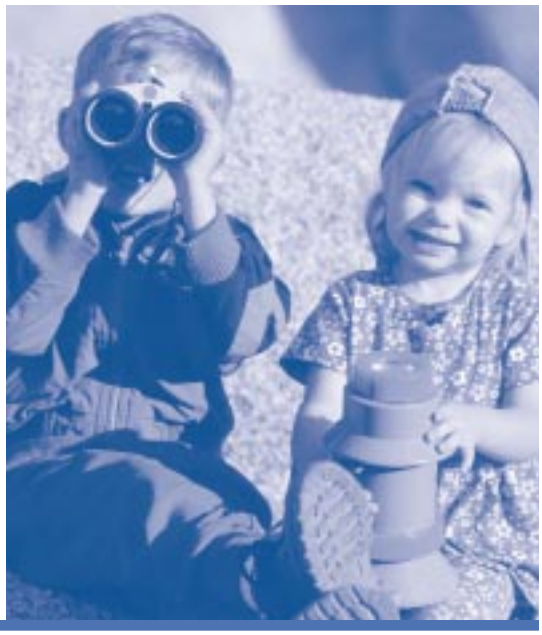
Section 3
Miscellaneous Questions
Frequently Asked About Testing



Q: *What Are Home Test Kits?*

A: Home test kits are chemical test kits which are designed to check for lead in paint, soil, and dust (and in some cases water, dishes, glasses, and ceramics). Lead is detected by a reaction that causes a color change when chemicals in the kits are exposed to lead. In one type of kit, the chemical solution turns pink, rose, or red to indicate the presence of lead. In another kit, the solution turns gray, black, or brown to indicate the presence of lead.

Q: *Does EPA Recommend Test Kits For Paint, Dust, or Soil Testing?*

A: No. EPA does not currently recommend test kits for testing for lead in paint, dust, or soil. Studies show the kits cannot reliably discriminate between high and low levels of lead. At this time, the kits are not recommended for testing performed by either homeowners or professionals.

If test kits are used, follow-up testing by a lead-based paint professional using EPA recognized methods is strongly recommended.

Q: *What About Testing For Lead In Water?*

A: Lead pipes and lead solder were once used in plumbing, and lead leaked into drinking water. Water testing is not routinely conducted by lead-based paint testing professionals, but you may ask for it as an optional service. If you would like information about testing for lead in water, call the EPA Drinking Water Hotline at **1-800-426-4791**.

Q: *What About Testing For Lead In Furniture, Dish Ware and Mini-Blinds?*

A: Lead may be present in the paint on furniture. If the furniture is old or the paint is damaged, you may want to have it tested. An Inspector or Risk Assessor may do this testing for you.

Lead may also be present in some glassware (for example, lead crystal) and in glazes found on ceramic wares. The lead may be absorbed into the drink and food stored in these items. Contact the National Lead Information Center Clearinghouse at **1-800-424-LEAD** or the Food and Drug Administration Food Information Line at **1-800-FDA-4010** for information on testing glassware and ceramics.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued a warning that some mini-blinds may contain lead. For further information, contact the CPSC hotline at **1-800-638-2772**.

For Further Information:

Topic	Agency	Contact Information
Testing ceramic ware and related items	Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Information Line	Phone: 1-800-FDA-4010
Information on lead in mini-blinds	Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)	Phone: 1-800-638-2772 Internet: www.cpsc.gov
List of trained lead professionals	Lead Listing	Phone: 1-888-532-3547 Internet: www.leadlisting.org
State lead programs and regulations; Current list of NLLAP laboratories; Lead brochures and fact sheets; General lead-based paint information	National Lead Information Center and Clearinghouse	Phone: 1-800-424-LEAD Or TDD-800-526-5456 (for the hearing impaired) Or Internet: www.epa.gov/lead/nlic.htm
Select lead-related web sites	EPA HUD	Internet: www.epa.gov/lead www.hud.gov/lead/leahome.html
Information on testing drinking water for lead	EPA Drinking Water Hotline	1-800-426-4791
Information on state lead professional and contractor certification and licensing	EPA Regional Offices: Region 1 (Boston, MA) Region 2 (Edison, NJ) Region 3 (Philadelphia, PA) Region 4 (Atlanta, GA) Region 5 (Chicago, IL) Region 6 (Dallas, TX) Region 7 (Kansas City, MO) Region 8 (Denver, CO) Region 9 (San Francisco, CA) Region 10 (Seattle, WA)	 1-617-565-3836 1-908-321-6671 1-215-814-2084 1-404-562-8998 1-312-886-7836 1-214-665-7577 1-913-551-7518 1-303-312-6021 1-415-744-1094 1-206-553-1985

Additional Reading:

These brochures and fact sheets can be obtained by calling the National Lead Information Center Clearinghouse at **1-800-424-LEAD**.

Lead In Your Home: A Parent's Reference Guide, EPA brochure, EPA publication number EPA 747-B-98-002 (June 1998).

Protect Your Family From Lead In Your Home, EPA/CPSC brochure, EPA publication number EPA 747-K-94-001 (May 1995).

Finding A Qualified Lead Professional For Your Home, EPA brochure, EPA publication number EPA 747-F-96-006 (November, 1996).

Identifying Lead Hazards In Your Home, EPA Fact Sheet, EPA publication number 747-F-96-007 (November 1996).

Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home, EPA brochure, EPA publication number EPA-747-K-97-001 (September 1997).

Disclosure of Lead-Based Paint Hazards in Housing, EPA/HUD Fact Sheet, EPA publication number EPA 747-F-96-002 (March 1996).

How To Check For Lead Hazards In Your Home, HUD/EPA/Consumer Federation of America brochure, (no date).