United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Prevention, Pesticides
and Toxic Substances
[Mail Code 7404]

EPA 747-F-98-002
June 1998
(http://www.epa.gov/lead)

EPA FACT SHEET

Standards to Identify Dangerous Levels of Lead

While potentially harmful to individuals of all ages, lead exposure is especially harmful to children under six years of age. Young children have rapidly developing nervous systems which are particularly sensitive to the effects of lead. Children also tend to absorb lead more readily than adults. Excessive childhood lead exposure causes learning disabilities, lower intelligence, behavioral problems, stunted growth, permanent hearing and visual impairment, and other damage to the brain and nervous system. Lead hazards affect children in families of all income levels and in all regions of the country. Children in poor inner-city communities, however, are disproportionately affected.

Lead-based Paint Hazards

Lead-based paint hazards arise from three sources:

- Lead-based **paint** (in poor condition);
- Lead-contaminated **dust**; and
- Lead-contaminated **soil**.

Children are exposed to lead primarily by **ingesting lead-contaminated dust and soil** through normal hand-to-mouth activity. For example, children may play with toys on a dusty floor and then put their hands in their mouths, or they may play in dirt outdoors and then eat a snack without washing their hands.

Some children also may directly ingest **lead-based paint chips** from flaking walls, windows, and doors, or may chew surfaces covered with lead-based paint. Over 80 percent of all housing built before 1978 contains some lead-based paint. If maintained in good condition, lead-based paint is usually not hazardous. Lead-based paint in poor condition, however, can create health hazards.

Dust may be contaminated by lead when lead-based paint deteriorates; lead-based paint is disturbed in the course of renovation, repair, or abatement activity; or lead is tracked into, or blown, or otherwise enters the home from contaminated soil in the yard or other external sources.

Soil may be contaminated with lead from deterioration of exterior lead-based paint, industrial emissions, and past use of leaded gasoline. Contaminated soil may be ingested directly or may contaminate dust when it enters the home. Other sources of lead exposure include lead-contaminated food and drinking water and occupational exposure to dust and airborne lead particles.

EPA recently proposed new standards to identify dangerous levels of lead under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). See 63 *Federal Register* 30302, June 3, 1998. The proposed standards apply to lead-based paint hazards in target housing (most housing built before 1978) and child-occupied facilities, such as day-care centers. For more specific information regarding the proposed standards, please see the Fact Sheet entitled “Proposed

Rule on Identification of Lead-Based Paint Hazards" (EPA 747-F-98-001).

Affected Entities

Many groups of people will be affected when this proposed rule is issued as a final regulation.

- **Lead-based paint professionals** engaged in risk assessments and abatements.
- **Firms providing training services in lead-based paint activities** that need to incorporate the new standards into their training courses.
- **Property owners** who must disclose hazards, *if known*, prior to property sale or rental under Section 1018.
- **Property owners that receive Federal housing program assistance,** such as State and city public housing authorities, owners of multifamily rental properties that receive project-based assistance, and owners that lease units under HUD's tenant-based assistance program.
- **HUD and other Federal agencies that own residential property** will use the final standards to identify hazards in pre-1960 housing before it is sold.
- **General members of the public** should be aware of the final standards and the risks associated with lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust and soil in order to protect themselves and children.

How to Submit Comments

Comments on this proposed rule may be submitted in written or electronic form. Each comment must bear the docket control number 62156. A public version of the official record for this rule (docket control number 62156) is available for inspection from 12 noon to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays, in the TSCA Nonconfidential Information Center, Room NEB607, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC.

Written comments. Written comments must be received on or before September 1, 1998. All comments should be sent in triplicate to: OPPT Document Control Officer (7407), Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Room G099, East Tower, Washington, DC 20460.

Electronic Comments. Comments and data also may be submitted electronically to: oppt.ncic@epamail.epa.gov. No Confidential Business Information (CBI) should be submitted through e-mail. E-mailed comments must avoid the use of special characters and any form of encryption, and be submitted in ASCII file format. Comments and data will also be accepted on disks in WordPerfect 5.1/6.1 or ASCII file format. Electronic comments on this proposed rule may be filed online at many Federal Depository Libraries.

Oral comments. If requested, the Agency will hold public meetings to hear oral comments. The Agency will announce in the *Federal Register* the time and place of any public meetings. Oral statements will be scheduled on a first-come first-served basis by calling the telephone number listed in the *Federal Register* notice. All statements will be made part of the public record and will be considered in the development of the final rule.

For More Information

For general information contact the National Lead Information Center's Clearinghouse, 1-800-424-LEAD (5323). Information is also available on EPA's website at http://www.epa.gov/lead/. For specific technical and policy questions regarding this rule, contact Jonathan Jacobson at (202) 260-3779 or e-mail at jacobson.jonathan@epamail.epa.gov.