



Lead paint in older buildings -- those built prior to 1978 before lead was outlawed -- has been a longtime health issue, especially for children and pregnant women who might be exposed to dangerous paint chips and dust.

PHOTO BY ADRIAN SCOTT FINE

EPA adopts new lead paint rule

How it affects older and historic buildings

Lead paint is in the news a lot lately, leading to much confusion, apprehension, and misinformation regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) newly-adopted [renovation, repair, and painting rule](#) in terms of what it does and does not mean for older and historic buildings.

A number of key points to keep in mind about the new EPA rule:

- Contractors now need to become a "certified renovator" through appropriate training.
- Renovators and dust sampling technicians must be trained and certified.
- Non-certified workers must work under and be trained on the job by a certified renovator.
- Work practices must be followed for any renovation covered by the rule.
- Renovator contractors need to educate owners and/or occupants.
- Training providers must be accredited.
- Includes most types of residential rehabilitation projects, including childcare facilities and schools (EPA rules on commercial projects are currently under consideration).
- Applies to renovation and/or painting involving more than six square feet of interior and more than twenty square feet of exterior painted surfaces apply.
- Only compensated work applies through jobs performed by hired contractors. Do-it-yourselfers and work performed by homeowners are generally not covered.

Why preservationists need to get the word out

Outreach regarding the new EPA rule has been spotty and confusing, and lead paint is a loaded issue with many facets. Some places are working hard to get the word out, such as Montana with their two-part video series ([one](#) and [two](#)) that does a good job of explaining the new rule and outlining twelve steps for working lead safe. Illinois has also produced some really helpful materials, such as the [Lead Paint and Historic Buildings](#) publication, set to be reissued this fall to reflect the new EPA rule.

While the new EPA rule is about lead safe-work practices, appropriate training, and becoming certified in EPA-approved methods of containing and cleaning up work areas, problems are arising at the local level. A lack of understanding about what the rule does and does not mean is starting to lead to a "chilling" effect on preservation.

Costs for renovation projects are reportedly on the increase and some contractors are now shying away from projects involving older buildings. The new EPA rule may inadvertently drive away contractors and do-it-yourselfers who may perceive the process to be overly bureaucratic and an increased financial liability. Unfortunately we are also hearing about reports from the field where information on the new EPA rule is being exaggerated or simply stated incorrectly, in order to increase profit and unnecessarily panic property owners into thinking they must replace older painted windows or siding.

The National Trust and its partners nationwide worry about how the new EPA rule on lead paint could lead to an increased pattern of unnecessarily tearing out character-defining features – windows, doors, siding – from older and historic buildings. We recognize the concerns that lead paint and dust present and encourage everyone to work and live lead safe. Properly addressing lead paint, however, does not automatically translate to tearing out older painted windows, doors, woodwork, and siding. The EPA rule does not implicitly call for this approach, nor is it always necessary or advised.

New online Lead Paint Guide

The National Trust recently launched an online [Lead Paint Guide](#) to help preservationists and property owners learn more about the new EPA rule. The guide includes the following links:

- [Lead-Safe Practices for Older & Historic Buildings](#)
- [Lead Paint: What's at Stake?](#)
- [Understanding New Regulations](#)
- [Ten Basic Tips for Lead-Safe Practices](#)
- [FAQ for Homeowners](#)
- [FAQ for Contractors](#)
- [FAQ for Preservation Organizations](#)
- [FAQ for Community Organizations and Property Managers](#)
- [Additional Lead Paint Resources](#)

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.PreservationNation.org) is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them. By saving the places where great moments from history—and the important moments of everyday life—took place, the National Trust for Historic Preservation helps revitalize neighborhoods and communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. With headquarters in Washington, DC, eight regional and field offices, 29 historic sites, and partner organizations in 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

www.PreservationNation.org/issues/lead-paint