

Essential Maintenance Practices & the Vermont Lead Law

Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is a serious but *preventable* health problem. Lead can cause permanent damage to children including learning disabilities, behavioral problems, decreased intelligence, and other health problems.

Adults also suffer adverse health effects from lead, including increased blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, anemia, impaired renal function, thyroid dysfunction, and cancer.

Lead in Housing

Lead paint and dust from lead paint are the major sources of lead exposure in children. In 1978, lead was banned in house paint. Most homes built before that year contain lead. Children and adults can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or whenever lead paint is improperly sanded, scraped or burned.

Over time, painted surfaces crumble into dust contaminating homes and soil. This dust or soil clings to toys, hands and objects that children normally put into their mouths, exposing them to lead. Children can also be exposed to lead by eating, chewing or sucking on lead-painted objects such as windowsills or furniture.

Lead Law

The Vermont Lead Law was passed in 1996 and updated in 2008 (18 VSA Chapter 38). The law requires that landlords of older buildings and child care facility owners take steps to help prevent children from being exposed to lead. If a residential rental property or child care facility was built before 1978, the owner of the property or the property management company is required to comply with the Vermont Lead Law. They must:

- Provide tenants with an approved pamphlet about lead poisoning prevention
- Post an approved notice asking people to report chipping or damaged paint
- Attend a training program approved by the Department of Health and ensure that anyone who performs essential maintenance practices on the property has completed the training program
- Complete essential maintenance practices annually
- Sign a compliance statement certifying that essential maintenance practices have been done and provide a copy to their tenants, insurance carrier and the Department of Health at least every 365 days

The lead law prohibits the use of unsafe work practices including removing lead-based paint by burning, using a heat gun, water or sand blasting, dry scraping, power sanding, and chemical stripping. These unsafe work practices increase the risk of lead exposure. The law requires the use of safe work practices including limiting access to work areas, using plastic dust barriers, wearing protective clothing, and misting or wetting painted surfaces or debris before disturbing it.



**DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH**

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Benefits of the Lead Law

Protects children. Simple ongoing maintenance practices will prevent children from being exposed to lead

Protects property owners. Property owners in compliance with the law receive increased liability protection.

Protects workers. The lead law prohibits the use of unsafe work practices which will reduce worker exposure to lead.

Saves money. By reducing children's exposure to lead, property owners may avoid the high cost of abatement that could be required in the case of a lead-poisoned child.

Essential Maintenance Practices

Essential Maintenance Practices, which must be completed annually, include:

- Inspecting the property inside and outside
- Identifying areas where paint is in poor condition and promptly fixing it in a lead-safe way
- Verifying the installation of low-cost inserts in window wells in all wooden windows
- Removing any visible paint chips on the ground outside the building
- Performing a specialized cleaning in common areas
- Taking precautions whenever remodeling to prevent spread of lead dust

Essential Maintenance Practices Class

The essential maintenance practices class is offered around the state by trained instructors. It is four hours long and is usually free. A schedule of classes is online at leadsafevermont.org.

The class helps participants to:

- Comply with the Vermont Lead Law
- Understand the health effects of lead exposure
- Learn ways to protect children from exposure to lead
- Know how to perform Essential Maintenance Practices safely
- Identify work practices that increase the risk of causing lead poisoning

Other Resources

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Vermont Department of Health
800-439-8550
<http://healthvermont.gov>

Lead Hazard Reduction Program
City of Burlington
(802) 865-5323
<http://www.cedoburlington.org>

Lead Hazard Reduction Program
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
(802) 828-3250 or 800-290-0527
<http://www.leadsafevermont.org>

US Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.gov/lead>