

FACT SHEET



Lead paint

introduction

Lead is a metal that was historically used in paint, petrol and plumbing. It is very dangerous for children under the age of six because it is absorbed readily into their blood and stored easily in their bones and internal organs.

Lead can damage the brain and other developing organs. Lead poisoned children can suffer from permanent learning disabilities, behavioural problems, hearing problems, developmental delays and other serious health conditions.

Prior to 1960, the oxide of lead was commonly used as a whitener in paints in Australia. Today, lead oxide has been replaced by titanium dioxide.

Lead has also been extensively used in industrial paint primers. Further lead in the form of yellow chrome and orange chrome pigments has been used in industrial finishes to produce strong yellow, orange and red colours.

Lead is a designated hazardous substance by the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984.

the need

There are over many homes built before 1970 in Australia, which still contain lead paint. Renovations of these buildings can place many people at risk including occupants (particularly young children and pregnant women), building contractors and neighbours.

Lead paint can be present on any painted surface but is most often found on windows, trims, doors, railings, columns, house verandahs and outside walls. Surfaces that have been repainted may have layers of lead paint underneath. Lead inspections as part of a hazardous materials / substances audit can tell you whether lead paint exists and where it may be located.

Peeling or damaged paint can also be dangerous. Lead dust can be released from peeling or damaged paint or by sanding or scraping paint in older properties or structures. Lead dust settles on floors, window sills and other surfaces where it can be

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a potential health risk. Lead paint in good condition is usually not a problem. In-situ dust can be disturbed during demolition activities or new dust can be generated by disturbing old lead paint. Dust can contaminate work areas or, if uncontained, adjacent areas and neighbouring properties.

In recent decades the majority of children admitted to hospitals with lead poisoning were as a result of unsafe home renovation and maintenance activities.

sample collection

Using a sharp, clean scraper the paint to be tested should be collected directly into a plastic zip-lock bag. If possible a sample of paint that covered approximately 100cm² (1g) is ideal for analysis.

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