

"With this unprecedented joint education effort, we are moving decisively to safeguard America's children from the hazards of lead-based paint in their homes."

Andrew Cuomo,
HUD Secretary

"It is unacceptable that millions of American children are exposed to the risk of lead poisoning every day. This joint effort will make a big difference in protecting families from the dangers of lead."

Carol Browner,
EPA
Administrator

Choose a Certified (Licensed) Lead Professional

Special training is needed to perform the Federally recognized lead evaluations. As mentioned earlier, over half of the States certify lead professionals. You should check a lead professional's credentials with your local Health or Consumer Affairs Department, or Better Business Bureau.

In some areas, people without State lead certificates offer lead evaluation services. **You should avoid hiring individuals or firms that are not certified for lead inspection or risk assessment by any State.** A State certification or license indicates that a contractor performs lead evaluations that meet State standards. A certificate of completion from a training course does not mean the person is certified by a State.

Home buyers often turn to home inspectors for advice on conditions in a home. Many home inspectors are certified as lead inspectors or risk assessors, while others are not. Ask your home inspection firm if it has a State certificate to offer lead inspections or lead risk assessments. If not, ask for a referral to a certified lead inspection or risk assessment contractor.

Where to Get More Information

HUD has a free list of all State-certified lead professionals -- you can call **1-888-LEADLIST**, or reach it on the Internet at **www.leadlisting.org**. Call the National Lead Information Center at **1-800-424-LEAD** to find out if your State certifies lead professionals. You can also find lead information on the Internet at **www.epa.gov/opptintr/lead/index.html** and **www.hud.gov/lea/leahome.html**.



How to Check for Lead Hazards in Your Home

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Consumer Federation of America

If you are planning to buy, remodel, or rent a home or apartment built before 1978, now is the time to investigate possible lead-based paint hazards. By knowing the risks and the remedies, you can protect your family from lead poisoning, one of the most widespread environmental health problems affecting children and adults.

You can ensure that a lead-based paint evaluation -- along with any needed treatment -- is discussed in the sales contract. Landlords and sellers must tell you in writing about any lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards they know about in most homes built prior to 1978 before you rent or buy.

Federal law recognizes three evaluation service options that may be performed by certified (licensed) lead-based paint professionals. Other tests, not covered by Federal law, are generally less expensive but provide consumers with less information and can be unreliable.

To help you choose the right service, HUD, EPA, and CFA strongly encourage you to use trained persons who, whenever possible, are State-certified (licensed) lead professionals.

This Consumer Notice is designed to help you make informed choices about the different lead evaluation services available.

What Is a Lead Hazard?

Lead-based paint in good condition is usually not a hazard. However, lead in paint chips, contaminated dust, and even bare soil can be serious hazards. Often the lead particles are too small to see.

Children with high levels of lead can suffer brain and nerve damage that results in behavioral and learning problems, slowed growth, hearing difficulties, and other ailments. Lead also is harmful to adults and renovation workers exposed to lead dust.

Lead Evaluation Services -- Options for Consumers

First, you should decide if you want to find lead-based paint, or if you want to find lead hazards. An inspector can test for lead-based paint; a risk assessor can also look for hazards. A family considering buying a home, for example, may want to know if the house has lead-based paint so that they can include repair costs in their financial or renovation plans. A couple planning to start a family may decide they need to know whether paint in their house poses a hazard to children.

Three evaluation services are governed by Federal law: lead hazard screen, lead inspection, and lead risk assessment.

Lead hazard screen: A screening determines whether a home in good condition has potential lead hazards. The risk assessor doing the screen takes fewer paint and dust samples than in a full risk assessment, but uses stricter rules to decide if the home has potential hazards. Lead-based paint hazards are unlikely in homes that pass the screen, even if the home has lead-based paint. If upcoming renovations or repairs will disturb intact painted surfaces, that paint should also be tested during the screen. A home that fails the screen should undergo a full risk assessment to determine the presence of lead hazards.

Lead paint inspection: An inspector performs this service to determine the presence of lead-based paint inside and outside the home. Paint is usually tested with an XRF (X-ray fluorescence) analyzer,

or by analyzing paint chip samples at a laboratory. An inspection alone does not identify lead hazards, while a risk assessment does.

Lead risk assessment: This service finds out if the home presents a health problem due to lead-based paint hazards. A risk assessor gathers information on the home's age, maintenance, and paint deterioration; collects and analyzes samples of dust, bare soil, and deteriorated paint for lead; and lists strategies to fix or control known lead hazards based on conditions in the home.

More than half of the States require contractors who provide these three services to be trained and certified. Under Federal law, anyone performing these services after August 1999 in any State must be certified. Certified contractors perform screens, inspections or assessments according to established standards so that test results are reliable.

Other evaluation services are more limited. These services may include some portions of the Federally recognized evaluations. While these reduced evaluations are not prohibited by the Federal lead disclosure rule and may be less expensive, they may not provide you with all the information you need. Contractors performing these other services in most States do not have to be certified, licensed, or approved.

You should use a certified lead-based paint inspector or risk assessor to help you decide which form of lead evaluation service best meets your needs.

Selecting a Lead Evaluation Service

Consider the following factors:

- Age of the home -- homes built before 1960 are more likely to have lead-based paint;
- Presence of children in the home;
- Current condition of the home's paint;
- Plans for renovating or remodeling;
- Your concerns about lead poisoning; and
- Available funds.