

# INFORMATION FOR PROPERTY OWNERS ON SCREENING FOR LEAD DUST HAZARDS IN HOUSING



## Purpose of screening for lead dust hazards

Screening for lead dust hazards is performed in older residences to find out if there is lead dust remaining after the owner or resident has repaired chipping or peeling paint (if any) and completed a thorough cleaning of all the rooms in the unit. Lead dust can be created through normal wear and tear, or any activity that damages a painted surface that has a layer of leaded paint. Lead dust particles can be invisible and difficult to remove from surfaces.

## Why would I want to find out if there is lead dust in a rental unit?

Housing built before 1978 may contain lead paint. Annually, hundreds of children in Maine are poisoned by lead dust in their homes. By adding a couple of relatively low cost actions to routine maintenance work at unit turnover, including sampling for lead dust, landlords and property managers can document that they have cleaned a unit thoroughly, demonstrating that they are providing housing that is unlikely to cause lead poisoning. Instructions for performing a thorough cleaning are available on-line at [www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/lead/pdf/dustremovalmanual.pdf](http://www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/lead/pdf/dustremovalmanual.pdf).

## Testing for lead dust

The State of Maine provides a free one day *Lead Sampling Technician* course to anyone who wants to learn how to take dust samples for lead. This training includes review of the Maine DEP's *Protocol for Screening of Lead Dust Hazards*. This protocol delineates where to collect samples for lead dust to demonstrate that a residential unit is lead-safe when there is no chipping, peeling paint and the unit has undergone a thorough cleaning. The training schedule is posted on-line at [www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/trainingcal.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/trainingcal.shtml); it is also available from the Maine DEP Lead Hazard Prevention Program at 207-287-7751.

As a property owner, you may collect samples for lead dust testing in your own properties. However, it is to your advantage to hire a certified Lead Sampling Technician, Lead Inspector, or Lead Risk Assessor to conduct this sampling in your properties. Samples obtained by a certified professional provide you with a level of professional assurance in the results, and are a prerequisite for listing a property on Maine's *Lead-Safe Rental Housing Registry*.

## What do the lead dust sample results mean?

Floor samples with a result  $>40 \text{ ug/ft}^2$  and window samples with a result  $>250 \text{ ug/ft}^2$  show that there is lead dust present at a level that poses a hazard on the surface from which the sample was taken.

**If results exceed these levels, the owner/occupant should re-clean the area from which the sample was taken.** Resampling can then be performed to confirm there is no lead dust hazard remaining.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Carpeted floors are **not** tested as part of a lead dust determination. Carpets should always be steam cleaned as part of unit turnover activities. If carpets are removed, a dust sample should be collected after cleaning the floor and before new carpets are installed.

### Do I have to disclose the results of lead dust sampling?

Yes. Federal law requires property owners to disclose any knowledge of lead-based paint and/or lead-based paint hazards, and state law requires the disclosure of lead hazards, to potential lessees. Sample results that show any level of lead dust indicate that there is, or has been, lead-based paint in the unit. Once you have cleaned a unit adequately, the dust sampling results will document very low or no lead dust. Providing prospective tenants with all sampling results shows that you have cleaned the unit so that it is safe for occupancy, even if there is lead-based paint present.

### How do I prevent recontamination to determine the source of lead dust

First, you need to determine where the lead dust may be coming from. Depending on where you identified lead dust, you may want to do one or more of the following:

- Hire a lead inspector or risk assessor to do a lead inspection which will result in a report that identifies all lead paint in a residential unit (including common areas);
- Use a home lead paint test kit, such as LeadCheck™, to check specific painted surfaces;
- If lead dust was identified from the floor of an entry way, look for visible paint chips and painted debris outside, especially around the immediate perimeter of the house; and
- Determine whether any resident may be bringing lead dust into the building from work or a hobby.

Once the source of the lead dust is identified, you can determine the most appropriate steps to take to prevent re-contamination of the residence by lead dust from that source. For example, if you see visible paint chips and/or painted debris around the outside of the house, you can collect the visible paint chips from the yard, cover accessible bare soil with mulch or plantings, and use a doormat to prevent tracking of lead-contaminated dirt into the unit.

### If there is lead paint in a unit, what can tenants do to minimize risk to their children?

When you provide the lead disclosure form, federal law also requires you to provide your tenants with the booklet *Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home*. This booklet provides parents with information on how lead poisoning happens and steps they can take to keep their children safe from lead.

Generally, children are exposed to lead from paint when they ingest dust or chips. Good housekeeping (including routine wet washing of windows and floors with an all-purpose cleaner) removes lead dust from a child's environment as it is generated by the normal wear and tear on paint. Additionally, you can provide your tenants with a form to use to notify you if any significant amount of paint is chipping or peeling, or post a notice asking them to report deteriorated paint and informing them who to contact. This gives you the information you need to fix the paint before it poisons a child.

### Questions?

Please call the Maine Department of Environmental Protection Lead Hazard Prevention Program at 1-800-492-1942 if you have any questions on lead dust determinations, maintaining lead-safe housing, hiring a Lead Inspector or Risk Assessor, and Maine's Lead-Safe Rental Housing Registry.