



Herbie's Tips & Trends

Update Your Home Safely with a Lead-Safe Certified Remodeler

You've made the decision to finally remodel the outdated kitchen and living room of your home. But if you live in a house built before 1978, a federal law regulating the removal of lead paint will affect your home remodeling project if you hire a professional remodeler.

In 1978, the use of lead paint was officially banned from residential construction. Before that, however, lead paint was used in more than 38 million homes, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Since 2010, contractors performing renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes built before 1978 have been required to be trained and then certified by EPA and must follow specific work practices to prevent lead contamination. Make sure your home is tested for the presence of lead-based paint before you begin any work – and don't take chances by hiring a contractor who says that testing isn't necessary and skipping the required practices can cut you a break on costs. That contractor is breaking the law.

The Dangers of Lead Paint

During a renovation or remodel, lead-paint dust can fill the air and be inhaled. Small children could ingest lead paint chips that fall from the wall. For young children, lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, hearing loss and behavior problems. In adults, lead poisoning can lead to hypertension and high blood pressure. Pregnant women run the risk of passing the poison on to their unborn child.

What are Lead-Safe Work Practices?

EPA has a free brochure on its website called "Renovate Right" that provides guidance to home owners and contractors about the safe removal of lead paint. An EPA-certified contractor will follow these specific work practices:

Contain the work area so that dust and debris do not escape. Warning signs will be put up, and heavy-duty plastic and tape will seal off doors and heating and cooling system vents, and also cover the floors and any furniture that cannot be moved.

Minimize dust. There is no way to eliminate dust, but some paint removal methods create less dust than others. Some examples include using water to mist areas before sanding or scraping, scoring paint before separating components, and prying and pulling apart components instead of breaking them. Methods that generate large amounts of dust and therefore should not be used include open flame burning or torching, sanding, grinding, planing, needle gunning, blasting with power tools and equipment not equipped with a shroud and high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuum attachment, or using a heat gun at temperatures greater than 1100°F.

Clean up thoroughly. When all the work is done, and before taking down any plastic that isolates the work area from the rest of the home, the area should be sanitized using special cleaning methods. These methods include using a HEPA vacuum to clean up dust and debris on all

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surfaces, followed by wet mopping with plenty of water.

How Do I Find a Certified Remodeler?

To become certified, a firm and a contractor within that firm must submit an application to the EPA and complete a federal or state-administered eight-hour class with two hours of hands-on training.

To find a lead-safe certified contractor or firm near you, visit www.epa.gov/lead.



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