



## Department of Environmental Protection

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# Getting the Lead Out: Guidance for Homeowners & De-Leading Contractors

## Background

Lead poisoning in children is one of the most common and preventable pediatric environmental health problems in the United States today. A significant source of exposure is lead-based paint. Many buildings, especially those built before 1950, contain lead-based paints on interior and exterior walls, windowsills, and other surfaces accessible to young children.

In 1998, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) clarified the regulatory status of lead-based paint from renovation and remodeling of homes and other residences. Simply put, EPA indicated that homeowners renovating their own property did not have to manage lead-based paint waste as regulated hazardous waste.

EPA more recently extended this exemption to include de-leading contractors doing work in homes, apartment buildings, and other residential properties.

This fact sheet explains the appropriate method of disposal for wastes produced from de-leading performed by homeowners or de-leading contractors.

## MassDEP Guidance

For many years, the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) required contractors to determine through a laboratory test whether a representative sample of paint chips and/or lead-painted architectural components, such as wooden window casings, doors, and door jams, exceeded specific limits. Materials that did had to be handled and disposed as hazardous waste, which has added significant costs to each job.

Today, lead-based paint residues generated from paint removal activities conducted by homeowners and contractors working at residential properties are not subject to hazardous waste regulations. See: [Massachusetts Policy on the Management of Wastes from Lead Abatement, Remodeling & Renovation Activities Conducted in Households](#)

By simplifying the procedures for disposal, MassDEP hopes to encourage additional residential abatement and removal of lead, thus protecting children from continued exposure.

## **Best Management Practices:**

- Follow occupational health and safety procedures in removing the paint.
- Collect lead based paint waste and dust, dirt and rubble in plastic trash bags.
- Store larger painted architectural components in covered containers, such as a roll-off, until ready for disposal.
- Post warning signs to limit unauthorized access at work sites and storage areas.
- Contact your local municipality to determine any volume limits for plastic trash bags to be disposed at curb or the solid waste drop-off center.
- To avoid fugitive lead dust emissions, keep paint wastes covered and conduct any processing, e.g. chipping, grinding, shredding, in an enclosure.

## **Disposal of Lead-Based Paint Wastes:**

- To minimize waste volume in large de-leading operations, woodwork can be compacted and shipped offsite in a sealed hydraulic-driven compactor.
- Stripping may be more effective on smaller surfaces. Spent solutions and sludges from residences are also exempt from hazardous waste regulations.
- Other wastes, such as work clothes contaminated with de-leading wastes, wall and ceiling plaster, plastic sheets and tape used to cover work areas, filters, air-purifying cartridges, and vacuum cleaning dust may contain lead and should be disposed in closed containers or trash bags at the curb or at solid waste facilities.
- Metal items coated with lead based paint can be recycled into the scrap salvage market.