

# Old lead paint

## What you need to know as a busy builder

**Do you know old leaded paint can be serious risk to your health?**

**These are essential health and safety tips you should follow, even if you don't directly employ the people working on your site.**

- Breathing or ingesting lead dust or fume can cause serious problems like kidney, nerve and brain damage or infertility.
- You are most at risk if you regularly do common jobs like:
  - remove existing paint coatings in properties built before the 1980s;
  - stripping old paint using blow lamps or gas torches;
  - dry sanding old paint.
- You can take simple steps to stop this dust and fume that will meet the law:
  - 1 Plan your work – Only strip back old paint if it is flaking, chipping or it is a risk to children.
  - 2 If paint is in poor condition remove using a combination of chemical paint stripper, wet abrasive paper and on-tool extraction.
  - 3 If paint is in good condition use waterproof abrasive paper to make a key for the new coat of paint.
  - 4 Remove any debris with a damp cloth.
  - 5 Place any debris, cloths, abrasive paper in a plastic bag for disposal.

### Remember

- Lead pigments were widely used in paints for homes, schools and offices until the 1960s.
- Lead pigments were not removed from commonly used paints until the early 1980s.
- Lead paint can be found under existing paintwork in older buildings.



### Fee for Intervention

HSE now recovers the costs of time spent dealing with material breaches of health and safety law. This is known as Fee for Intervention (FFI). FFI generally applies when an inspector finds something wrong that they believe is serious enough for them to write to you about. A fee is charged for the time spent by the inspector in sorting it out. Following the simple guidance on this sheet may help you to avoid having to pay a fee.

**1. Plan your work –**

Remove or protect soft furnishings and surfaces with plastic sheeting. Wear disposable overalls and an FFP3 mask.



**2. Stop dust getting into the air –**

Use wet abrasive paper or on-tool extraction. Passive capture bags on tools are less effective.



**3. Stop lead fume being produced –**

Set hot air guns or infrared equipment below 500° C. Do not use gas torches or blow lamps.



**4. Wash hands and forearms before eating, drinking and smoking –**

The small sink is not suitable. Provide a large sink, hot or warm running water, soap and towels.



© Crown copyright If you wish to reuse this information visit [www.hse.gov.uk/copyright.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/copyright.htm) for details. First published 09/14

The Working Well Together campaign aims to improve health and safety in the construction industry, particularly in small and micro businesses. For more information visit [www.wwt.uk.com](http://www.wwt.uk.com)



**This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.**