



Press Release

New York City Department of Health
and Mental Hygiene
Office of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NYC HEALTH, HOUSING, AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTS PROMOTE LEAD-SAFE WORK LAWS AS PART OF "HEALTHY HOMES" CAMPAIGN

Paint, hardware stores required to post signs warning against unsafe work on lead paint in homes, day cares and schools; Consumer Affairs Dept. to check for required signs during store inspections

NEW YORK CITY - December 13, 2004 - The New York City Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and Consumer Affairs (DCA) today announced comprehensive efforts to promote lead-safe work techniques as part of its "Healthy Homes" campaign. Unsafe practices such as dry sanding and dry scraping can result in release of lead dust, which is hazardous to young children. The City has reached out to more than 500 retailers in the five boroughs providing them with signage that reminds building superintendents, repair persons, contractors and "do-it-yourselfers" that dry sanding and scraping are illegal under City law. The announcement was made at Sister's Community Hardware Store in Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

Joining DOHMH Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH were Gretchen Dykstra, DCA Commissioner; HPD Special Counsel Harold Shultz; Atchudta Barkr, owner of Sister's Community Hardware Store; representatives from several community-based organizations; and other HPD and DOHMH staff.

"Home maintenance and renovation work should always be done carefully and lawfully, and we urge people who want to re-paint, repair or remodel their homes to first learn about lead-safe work methods in places where children live and visit," said DOHMH Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden. "The 'Healthy Homes' initiative promotes lead-safe home improvements through partnerships with hardware stores and community-based organizations. We would like to thank the staff at Sister's Community Hardware Store and the other businesses around New York that are helping us to spread the word about 'Healthy Homes' and helping to make the City's homes safer for all children."

"The City's coordinated efforts to educate businesses and enforce against violators will help keep New Yorkers safe from hazardous lead in their homes and workplaces," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "'Healthy Homes' materials are distributed in the DCA's Licensing Center, which serves as a hub for more than 100,000 of New York's small businesses, and inspectors will check for required posting during store inspections citywide. We are making every effort to help businesses know the rules, and will issue violations if necessary."

"Learning the basics at hardware stores is the first step," said Harold Shultz, Special Counsel for HPD.

"Residential building owners, tradespeople, remodelers, and tenants who want to learn more about safe

work practices when working with potential lead hazards and other home-based environmental issues, such as mold, can call 311 and ask for HPD's housing education program."

Paint Stores and Hardware Store Owners Are Required to Post Warning Signs

Last week, DOHMH and DCA sent letters and signage to over 500 hardware and paint stores, lumber yards and home centers in the City to advise them that if they sell paint or paint removal products, or rent or sell sanding equipment, they are required to post these warning signs that dry sanding or dry scraping techniques are illegal. Home improvement contractors and do-it-yourselfers are instructed to always use "wet" methods - for instance, misting surfaces with water prior to scraping - that help prevent lead-contaminated dust from being released. During their routine inspections, DCA inspectors will check to see that these signs are appropriately posted and issue violations if necessary.

Educating Consumers about Healthy Homes

The centerpiece of the Healthy Homes campaign is an "Action Kit," which contains brochures in English and Spanish, flyers that provide information on hazards and safe work practices, posters, and door decals. Healthy Homes materials are available at DCA's Licensing Center, and also at 130 home improvement stores in Queens, northern Manhattan and Brooklyn - including Sister's Community Hardware Store. The Healthy Homes program includes the joint DOHMH/HPD federally-funded Lead Outreach Grant Program - which provided education on lead poisoning prevention. Over the coming months, the City will collaborate with community-based organizations to expand distribution of Healthy Homes materials to additional stores.

Sister's owner and manager Atchudta Barkr, said "Consumers need to know that there are safe ways and products they can use when repairing and cleaning items in the home. I want my customers to be educated about home health hazards and the steps they can take to work safely."

New Cases Of Childhood Lead Poisonings Continue To Decline, But Lead Poisonings Remain A Persistent Problem

In 2003, new cases of childhood lead poisonings in New York City declined 14% from the previous year, and 82% in the past decade. However, with more than 3,400 new cases last year, childhood lead poisoning remains a serious problem in New York City, especially in certain neighborhoods.

"Childhood lead poisoning is preventable," added Commissioner Frieden. "The City's approach has led to dramatic decreases in the number of cases over the past decade. However, lead poisoning rates remain unacceptably high, and 'Healthy Homes' is part of a comprehensive effort to educate New Yorkers about preventing and eliminating lead poisoning."

Other components of the Healthy Homes program include:

- ▶ Having your apartment or home inspected and repaired if there are signs of peeling paint. Landlords are required to do this at no cost to tenants. If landlords fail to correct peeling paint conditions, tenants should call 311 for assistance.
- ▶ Controlling asthma and allergy triggers.
 - Don't smoke or allow anyone to smoke inside your home

- o Remove mold safely and stop water leaks that could lead to mold growth
- o Use safe pest control methods to reduce cockroach and rodent infestations
- o Use wet mops and wet cloths to clean up dust
- o Wash bedding material and plush toys weekly in hot water to reduce dust mites

"Make Your Homes Safe and Healthy" - a Take Care New York Priority

Having a home that is free of environmental hazards is one of the top ten priority interventions in Take Care New York, the City's comprehensive health policy. Among the steps New Yorkers can take to ensure a safer home:

Make sure your child is tested for lead at 1 and 2 years of age, as the law requires.

Make sure window guards are installed in homes where children under the age of 10 live.

Make sure all furnaces, space heaters and gas appliances are properly ventilated and inspected annually.

Install carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, particularly outside each bedroom or sleeping area.

Wash toys and other things that children put in their mouths. Wash children's hands often, especially before they eat and before they go to sleep.

Use a wet mop or wet cloth to clean floors, windowsills, furniture, and other dusty places.

Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula. Hot tap water may contain more lead. Run the water for cooking and drinking until it is cold.

