



LEAD FACT SHEET

What is lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring metal found in the earth's crust. Lead can be found everywhere, much because of human activities such as burning fossil fuels, mining, and manufacturing.

How are employees exposed to lead?

Workers can be exposed to lead through inhalation of fumes and dusts, as well as through ingestion as a result of lead-contaminated hands, food, drinks, cosmetics, tobacco products, and clothing. Furthermore, workers can take lead home on their clothes, skin, hair, tools, and in their vehicles, potentially exposing their families to harmful health effects. Workers may be exposed to lead from a variety of work activities.

In general industry, lead can be found in the following types of businesses:

radiator repair shops	lead fishing weight production
battery recycling	ceramic shops where lead glaze is used
auto body shops	any industry where lead soldering is done
scrap metal handling	bullet manufacturing & indoor firing ranges
brass, copper or lead foundries	

In construction, lead exposure can occur in the following jobs or tasks:

- Commercial building or residential paint removal
- Demolition and renovation of buildings
- Steel -bridge maintenance and repair
- Maintenance or repair of other painted steel structures
- Welding, torch cutting, scraping, grinding, or sandblasting painted metal objects

How does lead exposure affect me?

Overexposure to lead can cause problems with the central nervous system, cardiovascular system, reproductive system, hematological system, and the kidneys. It can also harm children when you bring lead home on your clothing, skin, hair and vehicles. Lead poisoning often goes undetected since many of the symptoms, such as stomach pain, headaches, anxiety, irritability, and poor appetite, are nonspecific and may not be recognized as symptoms of lead poisoning.

What should I do to protect myself?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used to prevent or minimize exposure. Gloves, eye protection and other PPE may be necessary to prevent skin contact. Additionally, respiratory protection may be needed if exposure levels exceed the limits set in the lead standard. Employees must practice good personal hygiene to prevent ingestion of lead, such as washing their hands and face prior to eating, smoking, or applying cosmetics.

Are there OSHNC standards for lead?

Yes, the following are standards OSHNC has adopted for lead:

- **29 CFR 1910.1025** – for general industry
- **29 CFR 1915.1025** – for maritime industry
- **29 CFR 1926.62** – for construction industry

The major elements of the lead standards are:

- A permissible exposure limit (PEL) of 50 micrograms of lead per cubic meter of air, as averaged over an 8-hour period.
- Requires that employers use engineering controls and work practices, where feasible, to reduce worker exposure below the PEL.
- Requires that employees be provided with protective clothing and, where necessary, with respiratory protection accordance with 29 CFR 1910.134.
- Requires that employees exposed to high lead levels be enrolled in a medical surveillance program.

Where can I find additional information?

Please review our [Lead Subject Index](#) page.