

Toolbox Talk

Lead

Exposure to lead, lead dust and fumes constitutes a hazard to health because it is a toxin and has been used in paint products, pipes, cables and as roof flashing.



Where will you find Lead?

Lead dust is likely to be found where old lead based paints have been used and where there is a build-up of lead contaminated dust in lofts and roof, ceiling and floor voids from vehicle emission before 2000 when leaded petrol became illegal. Lead may be encountered in building materials during renovation or refurbishment, for example lead pipes, cables and roof flashing, upstands and gutters. Lead was used for fixings into stone (collar anchors at lock gates) and may be present in architectural metal work.

Effects of Lead:

Lead is a cumulative poison and can get into the body through inhalation of lead dust and fumes and by ingestion of lead particles through hand to mouth contact. It collects in the kidneys and soft tissues and then accumulates in the bones.

A high level of lead in the body can cause headaches, tiredness, irritability, constipation, nausea, stomach pains and loss of weight. If uncontrolled, continued exposure could cause kidney, nerve and brain damage.

Anyone working with lead or lead-containing materials should take personal hygiene measures to prevent inhaling or ingesting lead during or after work.



Activities liable to result in significant exposure:

Restoration groups are likely to be carrying out some types of work that have the potential to generate significant exposure to lead and must be controlled:

- Dry-sanding old paint.
- Burning off old lead paint.
- Disc abrasion of lead surfaces or cutting lead with abrasive wheels.
- Removing or disturbing old lead sheet.
- Recovering lead from scrap and waste.
- Disturbance of lofts and roof, ceiling and floor voids where contaminated dust from pre 2000 car exhaust emissions has accumulated, including moving loft insulation.
- Flame cutting steelwork painted with lead-based paints.