

ALLIANCE ALERT

A MONTHLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER BY THE ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHY HOMES

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Give to the Alliance and Help Secure Healthy Housing in Your Community

For nearly 20 years, the Alliance for Healthy Homes has worked to protect children and families from dangerous conditions in housing. We have pushed the Federal government to require lead-safe work practices during renovation work, assisted community-based organizations to demand protective state and local policies, and have helped force health considerations into building codes used by hundreds of localities.

However, we cannot continue our critical work without your support.

While we are fortunate to have dedicated grants for our larger projects, we rely on donations from individuals like you to fund our critical policy work. Without your support, we are unable to take the message of safe, affordable and healthy housing to Congress and key decision makers in DC and beyond.

Won't you please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Alliance for Healthy Homes during this Holiday season? For a quick and easy donation by credit card, please visit our website at http://www.afhh.org/misc/misc_contrib.htm. You may also send a check, payable to Alliance for Healthy Homes, to 50 F St., NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20001.

Finally, if you are able, please designate the Alliance in your donation to the Combined Federal Campaign, which allows employees of the Federal government to donate to nonprofit charities through automatic payroll contributions. The Alliance's Combined Federal Campaign identification number is 10367. Many thanks to all who contribute!

International Code Council Committee Accepts Proposals from the Alliance and NCHH

A committee of the International Code Council (ICC) considered a series of proposals from the Alliance for Healthy Homes and the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) to improve the 2012 version of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC). The IPMC applies to all structures, but as a practical matter it is the nation's model housing code governing conditions in and around the structure that affect occupants. Several states and nearly 600 localities across the country have adopted the IPMC for housing. The committee's decisions go for public comment this spring and a final vote by code officials in Charlotte, NC from October 28 to November 1, 2010.

The Alliance and NCHH are delighted to announce that the committee accepted three of our proposals:



- Require use of the lead-safe work practices to repair deteriorated paint on structures built before 1978. The LSWPs are those defined in EPA’s renovation, repair and painting rule. Paint is presumed to be lead-based paint unless testing shows otherwise.
- Require carbon monoxide alarms in dwelling units with combustion sources or an attached garage. There are exemptions for homes with ventilated or open attached garages.
- Prohibit the use of portable unvented fuel-burning space heaters to provide comfort heating.

Another ICC committee accepted our proposal to adopt California’s strict standards for formaldehyde from composite wood products.

ICC committees gave serious consideration to other proposals but did not approve them. However, the Alliance and NCHH anticipate submitting public comments to address committee concerns about these other proposals and will pursue approval by the ICC code officials next year. These proposals include:

- Requiring radon-resistant new construction in high risk areas (counties designated Zone 1 and Zone 2 by EPA).
- Requiring removal, replacement or remediation of interior porous or water permeable surfaces that have visible mold.
- Defining “sanitary” so that code inspectors can more effectively apply this term that is used throughout the IPMC, and modifying the definition of “infestation.”
- Requiring use of a licensed pest management professional when a code official orders pest control.
- Establishing clear provisions in the IPMC for standards to address a variety of specific health issues.

In a related safety issue, the committee responsible for the International Residential Code affirmed the ICC membership’s decision to require sprinklers in one- and two-family housing.

As with any success, this work was done by a team. Special thanks to our colleagues Marc Nard; Wayne Jewell of Southfield, MI; Warren Friedman of HUD; Angela Mickalide of the Home Safety Council; Howard Asch of Michigan; Tom Mahar of New York; Doreen Cantor Pastor and Phil Jalbert of EPA; Tom Julia; Madeleine Shea and Meghan Butasek of Baltimore; Ruth Ann Norton and Wes Stewart of The Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning; Gloria Linnertz of Cancer Survivors Against Radon; Peter Hendrick, Julie Somis, and Dave Kapturowski of the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists; and Mike Pyles of Pennsylvania’s Department of Environmental Protection.

For more information, contact tneltner@nchh.info or jmalone@afhh.org.

Healthy Housing Advocates Respond to EPA Proposed Changes to RRP

As discussed in [last month’s Alert](#), EPA has proposed a number of changes to the lead-safe remodeling, repair and painting (RRP) rule, pursuant to a settlement agreement with public interest petitioners. Key among these changes was a proposal to eliminate the owner-occupied opt-out provision, and a requirement for the Renovator to provide additional notifications to owners and occupants following the completion of a job. The Alliance strongly supported the EPA in making these changes.

In cooperation with the National Center for Healthy Housing and the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, the Alliance submitted joint comments to the US EPA supporting their proposal as written and encouraging the EPA to reject a number of weaker alternatives. The comments provide legal and practical reasons for EPA to move forward with the proposed rule. Additionally, the Alliance and NCHH supported EPA's efforts to reduce the number of EPA-accredited lead training hours required to be a principal instructor under the rule. [A full copy of the submitted comments](#) is available on our website.

To encourage additional comments in favor the proposal, the three organizations hosted a conference call on November 20 to share a draft version of the joint comments, discuss the proposal and answer questions. EPA is accepting comments through November 27.

In other RRP news, EPA has posted a database of [frequently asked questions](#) about the RRP rule to their website. Although the seventeen questions listed by the EPA don't include much new information, there is an option to submit additional questions for EPA to consider. With help from Alert readers asking good questions, this has the potential to be a great resource.

Healthy People 2020 Seeks Public Input

Every 10 years, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leverages scientific insights and lessons learned from the past decade, along with new knowledge of current data, trends, and innovations. Healthy People 2020 will reflect assessments of major risks to health and wellness, changing public health priorities, and emerging issues related to our nation's health preparedness and prevention.

Public participation is shaping Healthy People 2020, its purpose, goals, organization, and action plans. HHS is seeking input from communities and stakeholders through public meetings across the country and public comment periods. As a national initiative, Healthy People's success depends on a coordinated commitment to improve the health of the nation. [Comments are being accepted](#) regarding draft objectives for Healthy People 2020 until December 31, 2010. The overall idea is to track US progress on health using objective and measurable indicators for which data is already collected.

Many Healthy People 2020 objectives merit attention, but those noted below are of particular interest as they pertain to healthy homes (homes with physical problems, lead hazards, and radon mitigation/reduction; frequency of EBLLs, allergens, and pesticide-induced illness):

Objectives Retained "As Is" From Healthy People 2010

- EH HP2020-3: Reduce pesticide exposures that result in visits to a health care facility.
- EH HP2020-5: Reduce the proportion of occupied housing units that have moderate or severe physical problems.

Objectives Retained But Modified From Healthy People 2010

- EH HP2020-13: Eliminate elevated blood lead levels in children.
- EH HP2020-16: Reduce indoor allergen levels.
- EH HP2020-17: Increase the proportion of persons living in homes at risk that have an operating radon mitigation system.
- EH HP2020-18: Increase the number of new homes constructed with radon-reducing features, especially in high-radon-potential areas.
- EH HP2020-20: Increase the proportion of persons living in pre-1978 housing that has been tested for the presence of lead-based paint hazards.

Objectives New to Healthy People 2020

- EH HP2020-24: Decrease the number of U.S. homes that are found to have lead-based paint or related hazards.

[Click here](#) for the complete list related to environmental health.

For more information on Healthy People 2010, see <http://www.healthypeople.gov/Default.htm>.

CPSC Releases Reports on Smelly, Corrosive Chinese Drywall

On November 23, the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) released a series of reports on its findings to date regarding drywall imported from China and used in new home construction in 2006 and 2007, particularly in Florida. Similar drywall was also widely used in the restoration of Gulf Coast homes beginning in 2005, following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which struck in 2004.

The CPSC findings reveal that the agency has gotten more than 2,000 reports from consumers in 32 states, DC and Puerto Rico about contaminated drywall in homes. Most commonly, occupants have complained of rotten-egg smells; irritated eyes, skin and lungs; asthma attacks; and headaches. Several occupants say that copper pipes and electrical wiring turned black from corrosion.

CPSC concludes that there is a “strong association” between homes built with the imported drywall and levels of hydrogen sulfide in the indoor air. The report also makes the link between the drywall’s sulfur content and health and maintenance problems, noting that “[i]n ways still to be determined, hydrogen sulfide gas is being created in homes built with Chinese drywall.”

Tests performed by a CPSC contractor also found elevated levels of formaldehyde in the air in homes with the imported drywall, which the CPSC said is not unusual in well-insulated new homes where a variety of building materials and furnishings may produce formaldehyde off-gassing. CPSC said that the hydrogen sulfide and formaldehyde levels found were lower than those known to cause irritation, the two compounds may be combining, either additively or synergistically, to produce higher levels of irritation than either would alone.

The reports also addressed concerns that corrosion of copper and silver caused by hydrogen sulfide could cause long-term safety hazards because of damage to electrical wiring or copper gas lines. CPSC did not find evidence that such parts were in danger of imminent failure, however they said the sample size of their survey was too small to rule out future failure from long-term exposure. CPSC’s contractor sampled 41 “complaint” homes in five states selected from CPSC’s consumer incident report database, and 10 non-complaint homes built around the same time in the same area as the complaint homes. CPSC plans to continue to investigate any possible long-term health and safety issues.

Finally, the new CPSC reports advise occupants to keep indoor air as cool and dry as possible, refrain from smoking and open windows, and spend as much time outdoors as possible. For more information, see [CPSC’s Nov. 23 press release](#), and a [CPSC web page](#) with links to the reports.



Recent Increase in Iowa Lead Poisonings Attributed to Unsafe Remodeling

On Nov. 16, the Iowa Department of Public Health issued a [press release](#) reporting an increase in childhood lead poisoning cases in recent months and an analysis of inspection findings that indicate the bulk of new poisonings are attributable to “homeowners renovating, remodeling, or making unsafe repairs to their pre-1978 homes.” A short-term increase in poisonings could be significant because it runs against a long-term trend in Iowa and elsewhere of gradually declining rates of childhood lead poisoning. The state’s press release did not provide details about the magnitude of the increase or a timeframe for it. The release noted that between June and September 2009 some 75 percent (12 out of 16) of poisoned children in 30 of Iowa’s 100 counties served by the state’s lead program (the other 70 counties are served by local health departments) were exposed to lead from home remodeling projects. A state lead program official theorized that the slow economy in recent months may be influencing homeowners to do more home remodeling as an alternative to moving to another home. If this theory is correct, similar increases in renovation and lead poisonings could be occurring in other states, too – although Iowa is the only state to report this increase to date.

Funding Available from EPA’s Environmental Justice Small Grants Program

EPA’s Environmental Justice Small Grants Program (EJSG) supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues that disproportionately affect low-income or minority communities. The Program assists recipients in building collaborative partnerships to help them understand and address environmental and public health issues in their communities. Successful collaborative partnerships involve not only well-designed strategic plans to build, maintain and sustain the partnerships, but also to work towards addressing the local environmental and public health issues.

The EPA EJ Small Grants Program is a national program with the total funding available for awards under this solicitation at \$1,000,000. EPA anticipates awarding approximately 40 grants in the amount of \$25,000 each. For information on how to apply, visit the [EPA’s website](#).

EPA’s “Green Homes” Website Provides Tools to Address Indoor Environment

EPA’s new [Green Homes website](#) will help people make their homes greener and healthier with tips on reducing energy consumption, carbon footprints, waste generation, water usage, and improving indoor air quality.

Several healthy homes issues are discussed in the website’s “[Protecting Your Health](#)” section, including mold, radon, carbon monoxide, and exposure to other toxic chemicals from building materials, household cleaners, and pesticides.

Users can also find references, such as a list of common green home terms, and links to dozens of EPA Web sites with more specific information on a wide variety of green home topics.

Recent Research in Healthy Housing

Auto exhaust makes “lead dust” from paint more available

A recent report published in the October 14, 2009, issue of Environmental Science and Technology finds that nitrogen dioxide and ozone in automobile exhaust increases the release of lead pigment granules from surfaces

coated with lead-based paint. Thus, families that live on busy streets apparently are at heightened risk for lead exposure – as well as increased air pollution and higher concentrations of street dust. An abstract of the article is available at <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/es901077m>.

IPM is effective in controlling pests and allergens in public housing

A recent study by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health published in the August 2009 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives evaluates IPM compared with traditional practice for its impact on pests, allergens, pesticide use, and resident satisfaction in 13 New York City Housing Authority buildings. Apartments receiving IPM had significantly lower counts of cockroaches at 3 months and greater success in reducing or sustaining low counts of cockroaches at both 3 and 6 months. IPM was associated with lower cockroach allergen levels in kitchens at 3 months and in beds and kitchens at 6 months. Pesticide use was reduced in IPM relative to control apartments. Residents of IPM apartments also rated building services more positively. Significantly, researchers found that an easily replicable single IPM visit was more effective than the regular application of pesticides alone in managing pests and their consequences. The article is available at <http://www.ehponline.org/members/2009/0800149/0800149.html>. More information can be found in an in-depth news story from Environmental Health News.

Stress and Lead Exposure Reduce Cognition in Older Men

An article published Nov. 6, 2009, on Environmental Health Perspectives Online concludes that low-level lead exposure and chronic stress may independently influence cognition. The researchers studied a cohort of about 800 older U.S. men, and examined the cross-sectional interaction between stress and lead exposure. Lead exposure was measured by blood lead and bone (tibia and patella) lead. Those with higher self-reported stress had lower scores on the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), adjusted for age, education, computer experience, English as a first language, smoking and alcohol intake. Those with high perceived stress scale (PSS) score had lower MMSE score for a two-fold increase in blood lead compared to those with lower stress. Researchers concluded that psychological stress has an independent inverse association with cognitive performance and modifies the relationship between lead exposure and cognitive performance in older men. The full article, entitled "Interaction of Stress, Lead Burden and Age on Cognition in Older Men: The VA Normative Aging Study," is available at <http://www.ehponline.org/members/2009/0901115/0901115.pdf>.

Upcoming Events

The US EPA and HUD are offering several free four-hour webinars, focusing on how to become a training provider under the new Renovation, Remodeling and Painting Rule. Remaining dates of the webinar include: December 10 and December 18, 2009 at 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. ET. Each of the offerings will have the same content, with time at the end for Q&A. To register, please go to: <http://hud-lead-trainthetrainer.webex.com>.

The Alliance continues to hold "Train the Trainer" courses throughout the country in order to help prepare organizations to become accredited trainers under EPA's rule. The next training will be held December 14-15 in Cranston, Rhode Island in partnership with the **Childhood Lead Action Project**. Additionally, there is a training scheduled in partnership with the NeighborWorks Training Institute in New Orleans March 1-2, and we are currently in discussions to offer the class in January in California. Check the **Alliance's training page** for updated information.

Enterprise Green Communities and the National Center for Healthy Housing have partnered to offer an educational session on radon resistant construction strategies, with a particular focus on multifamily structures. The webinar will be held Thursday, December 17, 2009 at 2:00 PM ET. **Register here** for the event. For more information on radon resistant construction in low-rise multifamily housing, visit NCHH's website and download a fact sheet on the topic.

“Lead and Beyond: Progress in Eliminating Lead Poisoning and New Opportunities for Collaboration in New Jersey” will be held at the Sheraton Edison Hotel, Raritan Center, 125 Raritan Center Parkway, Edison, NJ on April 16, 2010. The conference is sponsored by the New Jersey Interagency Task Force on the Prevention of Lead Poisoning and the Governor’s Council on the Prevention of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The deadline to register is April 2, 2010.

“The Indoor Environmental Health and Technologies Conference” sponsored by the Lead and Environmental Hazards Association and “The Lead and Healthy Homes Grantees Conference” sponsored by the National Association of Lead and Healthy Homes Grantees will be held April 27 – 30, 2010, at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel, New Orleans, LA. There also will be some pre-conference workshops on Monday, April 26th. The joint national conference includes program tracks and technical assistance workshops dealing with lead hazard control, lead poisoning prevention and healthy home program issues. Program tracks, technical assistance workshops and consultation roundtables are offered from Tuesday afternoon through Thursday afternoon to provide in-depth education and discussion. A special “early bird” registration discount is offered until December 31. For details, visit <http://www.leadmoldconferences.com/website/conference-program-2010>.

ALLIANCE NEWS

Alliance staff gave several presentations at this CDC’s National Environmental Public Health Conference in Atlanta, GA this past month, and at APHA’s 2009 Mid-Year Healthy Homes Conference in Philadelphia, PA. For a PDF of the presentations, visit http://afhh.org/aboutus/aboutus_publications.htm#Presentations.

The Alliance is proud to announce that we have substantially updated our website! Although the design of our site is the same, we hope structural changes will make it easier for people to navigate the wealth of information available, from information about specific hazards to what you can do eliminate hazards in your home and community. Check out the updated site at www.afhh.org!

If you appreciate the news and information in the Alliance Alert, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Alliance! We rely on donations from individuals and organizations to allow us to do policy work in Washington and across the country. You can make a one-time donation or sign up to make a recurring monthly or quarterly donation on our [website](#). Thank you for your support!

Sign up to receive updates from the Alliance! To receive the Alliance Alert in your inbox and to subscribe to our no-cost listservs (Leadnet and Healthyhomesnet), visit www.afhh.org/forms/alert_subscribe.asp.