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## Take Action to Ban the Sale of Lead Wheel Weights; Comments Due July 30th

On May 28, 2009 the Alliance joined the Ecology Center, the Sierra Club, and several other environmental health advocates in signing a petition urging EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to establish regulations prohibiting the manufacture, processing, and distribution in commerce of lead wheel balancing weights. EPA is now requesting comments on that petition, due July 30, 2009.

The docket - EPA-HQ-OPPT-2009-0467 – was posted to the federal register on July 16th. Visit

<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=EPA-HQ-OPPT-2009-0467>.

The Alliance urges all advocates to submit comments. It is especially important to share experiences you have regarding public or environmental exposures from lead wheel weights. We know that lead wheel weights result in a pervasive exposure to children.

While lead-based paint is still the chief cause of lead poisoning, it is important to eliminate all other unnecessary exposures. The petition asks EPA to ban the manufacturing, distribution and sale of lead wheel weights by January 1, 2011.

To see a copy of the signed petition, visit [www.leadfreewheels.org/TSCA\\_Wheel\\_Weight\\_Petition\\_5-28-09.pdf](http://www.leadfreewheels.org/TSCA_Wheel_Weight_Petition_5-28-09.pdf).

## Cost-Benefit Analysis of Lead Hazard Control Reveals Significant Savings

It has long been known that the chief remaining cause of lead poisoning is lead-based paint in housing, especially housing built before 1950, when lead paint was commonly used. For this reason, the elimination of lead paint hazards can create substantial benefits. Now those benefits have been quantified through a national cost-benefit analysis of lead hazard control by Elise Gould that appeared in the July issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Gould's study considers recent cost estimates of \$1.2 to \$11 billion to eliminate high-risk lead hazards. In comparison, she calculates the health costs associated with inaction.

High lead levels can cause multiple and irreversible health problems which include learning disabilities, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), mental retardation, stunted growth, seizures, coma, or, at high levels, death. But there

are social and behavioral costs of lead-poisoning as well. Even low levels of exposure have been linked to lower IQ and learning difficulties, which Gould argues increases the need for enrollment in special education services, lowers lifetime earnings, and greatly increases the possibility of engaging in violent criminal activity.

The study calculates benefits of \$192 to \$270 billion in avoided medical costs, special education costs, ADHD costs, and criminal activity plus increased tax revenue and increased earnings.

The bottom line is that each dollar invested in lead hazard control results in return of \$17 to \$221. Gould compares this net benefit to that of vaccination – which has long been accepted as “cost effective.” For every dollar spent on immunizations, vaccination against the most common childhood diseases is estimated to save \$5.30–16.50.

Gould’s study concludes that “there are substantial returns to investing in lead hazard control, particularly targeted at early intervention in communities most likely at risk. Given the high societal costs of inaction, lead hazard control appears to be well worth the price.” Lead-poisoning prevention advocates may be able to use study Gould’s argument to promote policies and investments in lead hazard control. Policy makers must recognize the costs of inaction are far too immense.

**Table 5.** Total costs and benefits of lead control.

	Conservative estimate	Optimistic estimate
Total benefit from lead reduction	\$192.38	\$270.45
Total cost of lead control	\$11.02	\$1.22
Total net benefit	\$181.37	\$269.23
Cost–benefit	1–17	1–221

All costs and benefits are in billions of 1996 dollars.

*Source: Elise Gould, Environmental Health Perspectives*

## Federal Legislation Seeks Ingredient Disclosure for Household Products

Some common household products would have to carry labels with a full list of their ingredients under proposed federal legislation known as the Household Product Labeling Act 2009. Modeled after federal labeling requirements for food and cosmetics, the legislation aims to give consumers more information about what exactly is inside those containers under the sink or in the garage. The Consumer Product Safety Commission would enforce the labeling requirements of the bill, which was introduced recently by Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY). The bill would require ingredient labeling for “any substance which is customarily produced and distributed for use in or about a household as a cleaning agent, pesticide, epoxy, paint or stain, or similar substance.”

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. It is already being opposed by the Soap and Detergent Association, which is working on a voluntary plan to give consumers more information about product contents. But environmental and health groups say the Israel bill would help shoppers minimize their exposure to chemicals that can irritate skin and trigger or exacerbate health problems such as asthma.

To download the text of the bill, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/c111query.html> and search: HR 3057.

## Smelly, Corrosive Chinese Drywall May Have Another Problem: Radioactivity

The *Los Angeles Times* reported in July that the drywall imported from China in recent years and that now is at the center of complaints of foul odors seeping from walls and reportedly causing corrosion to air conditioners, mirrors, electrical outlets and jewelry, may also be radioactive. While state and federal authorities have not yet fully determined the causes of the odor and corrosion, the culprit may be a radium-containing phosphorus substance, phosphogypsum, used by Chinese manufacturers for almost a decade. The U.S. EPA banned phosphogypsum for use in construction in 1989 because prolonged exposure to radium can lead to a higher risk of lung cancer.

The *Times* report cited a Chinese geoscientist who consulted in China's gypsum industry for about 30 years, who said drywall plants in China were now using 50 to 100% phosphogypsum as a drywall base. The *Times* report also cited Chinese building-material managers who said they have seen an increasing number of drywall makers using phosphogypsum in production and that the corrosion of metals seen in U.S. homes was consistent with drywall made with phosphogypsum. One anonymous manager estimated that 80% of Chinese drywall makers use phosphogypsum because it is cheap and there are no government restrictions.



But so far, tests in the U.S. have not turned up evidence of phosphogypsum. The rotten-egg odor and corrosion are also associated with volatile sulfuric acids. Some of the drywall may have been made with gypsum from Chinese mines where ores have high levels of sulfur compounds.

The *Times* also reported that no U.S. government agency is responsible for ensuring that imported drywall meets U.S. standards. The Consumer Product Safety Commission, U.S. Customs, the EPA, and the Department of Commerce all said their agencies were not responsible for testing drywall. Nevertheless, CPSC did publish a status report on the agency's investigation of the issue in July, but it does not address the phosphogypsum question. The report is available at [www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/drywallstatus07092009.pdf](http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/drywallstatus07092009.pdf).

## **CSTE Lowers Definition of Adult Elevated Blood Lead Level from 25 to 10**

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) voted at their annual meeting in June to recommend changing the definition of "elevated blood lead level" for adults from 25 to 10 mcg/dL, making it the same standard that exists for children. This would primarily impact surveillance and reporting, as the steps that public health officials take for a lead-poisoned adult are different than for a lead-poisoned child.

CSTE cited lead exposure in the workplace as one of the main reasons the definition should be lowered (particularly in certain industries as construction work, lead refining, manufacturing of bronze and brass, and demolition and maintenance of outdoor metal structures). Other exposures known to cause lead poisoning in children (including the exposure to lead dust from deteriorated lead paint) can also impact adults.

CSTE cited evidence that even a very low level of blood lead is a significant health risk at any age.

"The current ABLES data for adults with blood lead levels of less than 25 ug/dl reflects only sporadic reporting," CSTE President Mel Kohn, M.D., M.D.H. said. "The result is a significant underestimation of the health impact of elevated blood lead levels in the population of the United States that will be greatly alleviated by the new recommended reporting practices."

Additional details are listed in a [PRNewswire article](#).



## Update: Model Code Hearings This Fall

The International Code Council has announced the specific dates for its code change hearings this fall in Baltimore, MD (at the Hilton Baltimore, 401 W Pratt St). Below is a table showing the estimated dates when items submitted by healthy homes advocates will be heard during the hearing of all proposals for that particular model code:

Model Code	Healthy Homes Code Change Proposal Subject(s)	Hearing Date(s)
Property Maintenance	Sections 108.1.3, 110.1, 202 Define infestation and sanitary Section 305.3 Interior surfaces [repair/replace moldy mildewed surfaces] NEW Section 305.4 Pre-1978 Structures. [repair deteriorated paint using EPA work practice standards for renovations ] NEW Section 705.1 Carbon monoxide alarms NEW Section 705.2 Alarm requirements NEW Chapter 8 Health and Sanitation	Mon. Nov. 4
Existing Building	NEW Section 502.1.1 Lead safe work practices during additions, alterations and repairs NEW Section 602.1.1 Interior surfaces [repair/replace moldy mildewed surfaces] NEW Section 710.2 Water heating facilities. NEW Sections 704.4.4 CO alarms and 704.4.4.1 Alarms	Mon. Nov. 4
Residential	IRC NEW Sections R324, 325, 326 Swimming Pools, Spas and Hot Tubs; Barrier Requirements; Entrapment Protection NEW Section R325 Radon Control Sections R502.12.1 Floor Sheathing [update standard limiting formaldehyde]	Wed. Oct. 28 - Fri. Oct. 30
Building - Structural	Section 2303. Minimum Standards and Quality [Formaldehyde and Wood Products]	Mon. Nov. 4 - Thurs. Nov. 7

Public agency staff, advocates, and others are encouraged to attend the hearing and voice support for the code changes. For more on the code change proposals, visit [http://afhh.org/aa/aa\\_housing\\_codes.htm](http://afhh.org/aa/aa_housing_codes.htm).

## More Failures than Successes in Lead Poisoning Lawsuits

A number of governmental entities and individuals have sued lead pigment manufacturers to clean up hazards related to lead-based paint in housing and other buildings and to recover the public health costs of lead poisoning. However, these legal remedies have seen few successes of late.

On July 14, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled 6-0 that a Milwaukee child sickened by lead paint cannot

make a “defective design” claim against manufacturers, since lead is “characteristic of the product.” This disheartening decision limits the potential liability for lead paint makers facing lawsuits in Wisconsin.

About 30 pending cases involving Milwaukee children who were poisoned by paint are expected to go forward, but the argument will now be limited to asserting that companies failed to warn consumers of a foreseeable risk and created a market for a dangerous product. The plaintiffs will have to prove the industry was aware of the potential risks and failed to warn consumers about them. Under a design defect claim, they would have only had to prove the product was unreasonably dangerous when it left the manufacturer. See the [July 14th Associated Press article](#) for more details.

One recent legal success occurred in Mississippi in June, when a Jefferson County Circuit Court jury ruled paint manufacturer Sherwin-Williams Co. liable for the illnesses of a boy who ingested lead-contaminated paint chips. The jury awarded \$7 million in damages in the lawsuit filed on behalf of Trelvion Gaines and his mother, Shermeker Pollard of Fayette.

However, Sherwin-Williams attorneys at Jones Day and Corlew Munford & Smith filed motions asking the trial court to either throw out the verdict or order a new trial. They argue that the plaintiffs didn't meet their burden of proof. Jones Day was one of the firms that last July helped convince the Rhode Island Supreme Court to overturn a \$2.4 billion verdict against lead paint manufacturers including Sherwin-Williams. (See the [Alliance Alert article](#) about the Rhode Island Supreme Court reversed decision.)

On a more positive note, there was recent success in a suit brought on behalf of lead-poisoned children against a rental property owner in Utica, NY, last month. Four New York State siblings who were lead poisoned years ago settled a lawsuit against two of their former landlords for \$1.16 million. For more information see the [article on UticaOD.com](#).

Suits against rental property owners typically seek to compensate children who already have been poisoned on a case-by-case basis, but do not create an opportunity for prevention beyond the case at hand, and do not direct resources to the core of the problem—lead-based paint hazards that are poisoning children in their homes. If the lead industry is not held financially responsible for the damage caused by lead-based paint, there is little hope that taxpayer funds will be sufficient for broad-scale, primary prevention in at-risk communities.

## **Former “Meth Houses” Continue to Cause Severe Harm to New Occupants**

An [article in the \*New York Times\*](#) on July 13, told a heart-breaking story of Rhonda and Jason Holt, who have suffered a host of health problems since moving into their home in 2005. The Holts' three children have suffered breathing problems that called for respirators, repeated trips to the emergency room and, for the middle child, Anna, the heaviest dose of steroids a toddler can take. Ms. Holt, a nurse, developed migraines. She and her husband, a factory worker, had kidney ailments.

The couple discovered more than five years after they moved in that their house was contaminated with high levels of methamphetamine left by the previous occupant, who had been dragged from the attic by the police. The cost of clean-up is estimated near \$30,000.

Similar cases are playing out in several states, drawing attention to the problem of meth contamination, which can permeate drywall, carpets, insulation and air ducts, causing respiratory ailments and other health problems.

Some states have tried to fix the problem by requiring cleanup and, at the time of sale, disclosure of the house's history. But the high cost of cleaning, the stringency of the requirements and the degree of contamination - has left hundreds of properties vacant and quarantined, particularly in Western and Southern states afflicted with

high rates of meth use.

Suspected drug houses should only be entered by trained and specially equipped professionals who wear chemically resistant suits and boots, special gloves and respirators. Breathing fumes and handling substances, including touching contaminated surfaces, can cause injury and even death. Burns and poisoning can result from skin contact.

If a house has been contaminated due to cooking meth, the home must not be occupied until a licensed clean up contractor has followed procedures for decontaminating the home. A local health agency may review the clean up plan, the lab results, and the final clean-up document, and audit the property before giving authorization for that home to be reoccupied. Many times the home is so contaminated it must be destroyed and either incinerated or land filled. If you suspect a home has been used as an illegal meth lab, contact your local police department or sheriff's office and report your observations.

## **EPA Rolls Out Indoor airPLUS**

This summer, EPA is rolling out a program for new home construction called Indoor airPLUS. Homes with this label are designed for improved indoor air quality compared to homes built to minimum code. EPA created Indoor airPLUS to help builders meet the growing consumer preference for homes with improved indoor air quality.

In order to earn the Indoor airPLUS label, a home must first be designed and built to earn the ENERGY STAR—the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency. The result is a home that is significantly more energy efficient than a home built to minimum code, helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions. More than 30 additional home design and construction features are included in the label to help protect qualified homes from moisture and mold, pests, combustion gases, and other airborne pollutants.

Construction specifications include the careful selection of and installation of moisture control systems; heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems; combustion-venting systems; radon resistant construction; and low-emitting building materials. For more information, read EPA's [Indoor airPLUS Better Environments Inside and Out](#) pamphlet or visit the EPA's webpage at <http://www.epa.gov/indoorairplus/index.html>.

## **National Healthy Housing Policy Summit Report Now Available**

On May 7th, the Alliance and the National Center for Healthy Housing brought together leaders of 40 prominent nonprofits and experts in housing, public health, energy efficiency, green building, and tenants' rights to begin the development of the first *National Action Plan for Healthy Housing*. This National Healthy Housing Policy Summit set the stage for a collaborative approach toward improved affordable housing while building on lessons learned from the fight against childhood lead poisoning. Two documents are available now for reference; the [Meeting Report](#), which will serve as a basis for the *National Action Plan*, and the [Meeting Proceedings](#).

## **New Ventilation Standard Guidance for Existing Buildings**

The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has released a new Appendix C to Standard 62.2 - 2007 (Ventilation and Acceptable Indoor Air Quality for Low-Rise Residential Buildings). Appendix C provides guidance for meeting the ventilation standard in previously occupied buildings. The major focus of the addendum is to overcome barriers that exist to application of the standard in existing buildings. Specifically, many requirements that are easy to meet at the original design and

construction stage may be very difficult or extremely expensive at the retrofit stage, such as the selection and installation of conforming equipment.

The additional section factors existing building conditions into calculating airflow to meet whole-building and local ventilation needs, providing credit or deficit as appropriate for the effect of measured air-tightness, measured or rated ventilation equipment, and windows.

Appendix C, also known as Addendum e to 62.2 -2007, is available for free download on the [ASHRAE website](#). (You will need to scroll down to “Standard 62.2-2007, Ventilation and Acceptable Indoor Air Quality in Low-Rise Residential Buildings” and select Addendum e).

## Recent Research Findings in Healthy Housing

### *Low Levels of Carbon Monoxide Exposure Can Damage Fetal Brains*

A **recent study** published in the journal BioMed Central Neuroscience has shown that even very small, repeated carbon monoxide exposures during pregnancy can harm the brain cells of fetuses, impeding normal development and causing lasting damage. To simulate the exposure a human fetus could receive from a mother who is a moderate smoker, researchers exposed pregnant rats to 25 ppm of carbon monoxide in the air, a level comparable to amounts in home environments, particularly where gas appliances are used. The researchers determined that the young rats born to females subjected to the carbon monoxide-laced air had developed chronic oxidative stress. This condition damaged the pups’ brain cells and is a risk factor for many neurological and other diseases, such as cancer and cardiovascular illness. A University of California, Los Angeles news release about this study can be found at <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/ucla-study-uncovers-how-chronic-94824.aspx>.

### *Specific Pesticide Linked to Parkinson’s Disease*

Pesticide use has long been associated with Parkinson’s disease, but now, for the first time, researchers have pinpointed a connection between the disease and a specific pesticide. The researchers detected B-Hexachlorocyclohexane, or B-HCH, in 76% of patients with Parkinson’s disease – compared with 40% of healthy control subjects and 30% of those with Alzheimer’s disease. Further study is intended to determine whether other pesticides are involved in the link between Parkinson’s and B-HCH. The researchers, who also tested the patients for 15 other organochlorides, saw that a test for B-HCH as a risk factor for Parkinson’s could potentially aid in early detection and treatment. The study, titled “**Elevated Serum Pesticide Levels and Risk of Parkinson Disease**,” ran in the July issue of the journal Archives of Neurology. For more informatino, refer to the [news release](#) from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

### *FDA Used Outdated Assumptions in Analysis of Lead in Vitamins*

In the **July issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives***, Amir Miodovnik and Philip J. Landrigan commented on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s analysis of the risk posed by lead levels in vitamins. In it, they argue that FDA used outdated assumptions and poor reasoning to declare all tested vitamins safe following reports in 2007 of lead contamination in some vitamins. Among other points of concern, the authors note that FDA based its safety standards on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)’s “Level of Concern” of 10 µg/dL and presumed a child’s only exposure was to lead in food.

“Reconsideration of the FDA’s conclusions and recommendations would appear warranted,” Miodovnik and Landrigan wrote. “Pb is a known neurotoxicant, and its presence in a readily available and widely consumed product such as vitamin supplements provides an unnecessary and preventable source of exposure.”

## Upcoming Events

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) will host a workshop entitled “Public Health Law 101 for Non-Lawyers: Using the Law as a Tool to Protect and Promote the Public’s Health” on July 29, 2009 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET in Orlando, Florida. For additional information, please visit [www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/PHLaw/index.cfm](http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/PHLaw/index.cfm).

On August 6-7, 2009 an annual summer symposium on green affordable housing and community development will take place at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. The symposium is titled: Green Homes & Sustainable Communities: The changing landscape for financing, developing, and managing green affordable housing and is presented by Enterprise and Nixon Peabody LLP Legally Green, sponsored by the Home Depot Foundation. Register online at [www.ipedinc.net](http://www.ipedinc.net).

In partnership with the Neighborworks Training Institute, the Alliance will be holding an upcoming RRP Train the Trainer class in Chicago on August 17-18th. See a list of all Neighborworks trainings and events for 2009 at <http://nw.org/network/training/calendar/default.asp>.

Save the date for the symposium entitled “Promoting Environmental and Policy Change to Support Healthy Aging,” to be held September 15-16, 2009, in Chapel Hill, NC. This symposium is a third in a series funded by CDC’s Healthy Aging Program. More information on this symposium can be found at [www.prc-han.org](http://www.prc-han.org).

Save the Date for the September 15-17, 2009 Healthy Homes Conference in Boise, ID. The Idaho Healthy Homes Conference will address the connection between health and housing and how to take a comprehensive approach to identify and resolve problems. Featured topics will include new federal regulations requiring control of lead-based paint hazards during renovation, repair, and painting; public and private program funding for health and housing programs as well as collaboration between health, housing, and environmental professionals to develop state and local healthy homes programs. For a list of Continuing Education Credits and Credentialing offered, go to [http://www.healthyhomestraining.org/Practitioner/Essentials\\_Agenda\\_Materials\\_All\\_documents\\_3-09.pdf](http://www.healthyhomestraining.org/Practitioner/Essentials_Agenda_Materials_All_documents_3-09.pdf) (see pages 13-14). The conference is free, but there may be a small charge to cover the cost of refreshments and meals. For additional information visit <http://www.hud.gov/idaho> or call 208-334-1088 x3017.

The 19th International Radon Symposium will be held in St. Louis, MO from September 20-23. The Symposium is sponsored by the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST). The Symposium is held in conjunction with the Conference of Radiation Control Protection Directors’ National Radon Training Meeting. “The WHO Handbook on Indoor Radon: A Public Health Perspective” will be one of a number of presentations that will be presented at the Symposium. Further information can be found at [www.aarst.org](http://www.aarst.org).

The Northwest Children’s Environmental Health Forum will be held October 1-2, 2009 in Tukwila, Washington. You are invited to attend this two-day event that will bring together policy makers, professionals, K-12 educators, academic researchers, individuals and others to showcase new research, current science and effective programs. The Forum is Organized by the Children’s Environmental Health Working group of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment – Northwest. For more information, visit [www.chenw.org/CEHforum.html](http://www.chenw.org/CEHforum.html).

The **National Mid-Year Conference on Eliminating Childhood Lead Poisoning, Implementing Healthy Homes Programs and Combating Indoor Environmental Hazards** will be held October 15-16, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA. The conference brings together professionals from health, housing, community development, community groups, advocacy organizations, the lead industry, real estate firms, and residential and commercial facilities to explore the ways to undertake programs and projects designed to prevent incidents of lead poisoning and eliminate indoor environmental hazards.

The 2009 National Environmental Public Health Conference: Healthy People in a Healthy Environment seeks to promote the nation’s environmental health capacity by enhancing the expertise of environmental health professionals - including public health and healthcare professionals, academic researchers, representatives from

communities and organizations, as well as advocacy and business groups with a primary interest in environmental public health. The conference will be held October 25-28 in Atlanta, GA. Visit <http://www.team-psa.com/2009nephc/main.asp>.

The American Public Health Association will be holding its Annual Meeting, November 7-11, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA. The theme this year is “Water and Public Health: the 21st Century Challenge.” The conference will explore the latest public health challenges and learn about what can be done to protect our resources, our health and our world. For more information or to register, visit <http://www.apha.org/meetings/>.

## ALLIANCE NEWS

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 RRP rule. We conducted two successful trainings last month in Canton and Worcester, Massachusetts and Alliance staff will be traveling to Chicago on August 17-18 to deliver the Train the Trainer class in partnership with the NeighborWorks Training Institute. To register for the Chicago NTI training, please visit the [Neighborworks website](#).

For more information on the requirements to become an accredited training provider, as well as to learn more about hosting a Train the Trainer class in your community, contact Patrick MacRoy at [pmacroy@afhh.org](mailto:pmacroy@afhh.org) or visit our website.

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