

The OSHA Lead Standard for Construction

How Can an OSHA Standard Help?

The OSHA lead standard for construction was issued in June of 1993. It is directed at preventing lead dust from getting into your body by breathing it in or from accidentally putting it into your mouth. The standard relies on a blood test (**blood lead monitoring**) to check to see if prevention efforts are effective.



The standard also attempts to **protect your family** by requiring that you are given training, tools and protective clothing to be worn only while at work to avoid bringing lead dust home on your clothes. **Training** for you is one of the most important aspects of this standard, because without your understanding of how lead poisoning occurs, it cannot be prevented.

What Does OSHA Require?

OSHA starts with testing how much lead is in the air. This can be based on new air tests or past experience.

If the air tests show levels over the **action level** of $30 \mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$ then:

- Workers must be offered **blood lead testing** which must be repeated if results are high.
- Workers must be given **training** in lead hazards and safe handling practices. Training must be done initially and repeated annually. You may have the opportunity to move from job to job and to see different ways of doing things. You may have the opportunity to bring improvements that you saw on one job to the next.
- Air sampling must be repeated until the levels are brought below the action level.

If the air tests show levels above the **permissible exposure limit (PEL)** of $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$ many more protections are required besides those above:

- ➔ A **written work plan** detailing what engineering and work practice controls will be used to reduce and maintain exposures below the PEL. The **controls must be used if they are feasible**, even if they don't reduce the lead to levels that would make it unnecessary to wear a respirator. This workplan must be available for you to see.
- ➔ A **respirator program** is an important means of control in construction. See the fact sheet on "Respirators" for details; these include proper type of respirator, maintenance,

fit testing, physical exams, and training.

- There should be **clean change areas** with separate storage facilities for protective work clothing and equipment and for street clothing. You should not leave the worksite wearing your dirty work clothes.
- The employer should provide **shower** facilities where feasible (DOT health and safety specifications require decon trailers with clean and dirty sides and a shower between).
- Your employer must provide a **lead-free eating area**. You should not bring lead dust in on your clothes.
- You must be provided with **handwashing** facilities at the site and use them before eating, before smoking and at the end of the shift.
- You must be given a **medical exam** in addition to the blood testing and the respirator physical at least annually.

Medical Removal Protection

OSHA requires that if your blood lead level rises **above 50 µ/dl (on 2 tests)**, you must **not** work in a job with lead exposure until 2 consecutive blood lead levels are below 40 µg/dl.

If you are removed for this reason, your employer **must continue to pay you at your normal rate** for up to 18 months, or as long as the job continues, and if your blood lead remains elevated for up to 18 months.

Your doctor may recommend that you work only in areas with minimal lead exposure at lower blood lead levels (CRISP recommends this at 35 µg/dl). If this happens, you will not have the OSHA pay protection, although you would be covered under workers' compensation.

Please note that the DOT health and safety specifications require more testing if the blood lead levels are above 25 µg/dL.

This form originated from **CRISP** (The Connecticut Road Industry Surveillance Project), a statewide health monitoring project designed to identify and limit lead poisoning in Connecticut bridge workers. Questions may be directed to:

*State of Connecticut Department of Public Health
Division of Environmental Epidemiology & Occupational Health
410 Capital Avenue
MS#11OSP
Hartford, CT 06134
Telephone: (860)509-7744*

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