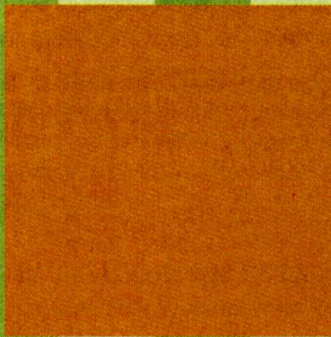
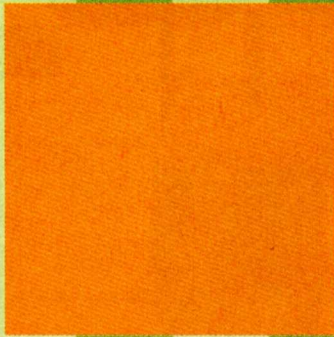
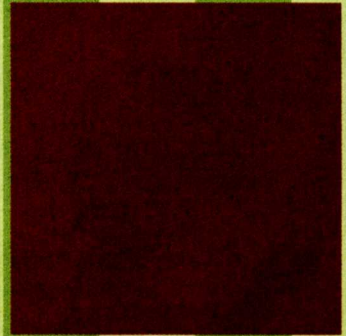
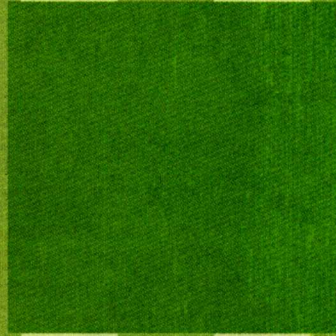


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Safety

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Help Ensure a Lead-Free Environment for Children

By Maria J. Doa

Is your school or child-care facility planning to make repairs or renovations? If so, there are new federal regulations that must be followed in order to protect children from lead-based paint hazards that can result from this type of work. Children can be exposed to toxic dust from lead-based paint when older housing or buildings are renovated or repaired. Because many children spend a great deal of time in schools or child-care facilities, it is especially important for administrators, child-care business owners, and parents to be aware of potential lead hazards associated with renovation or repair work in older buildings.

The dangers of lead

Approximately 300,000 children have elevated levels of lead in their bodies as a result of exposure to lead hazards, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Lead poisoning can affect nearly every part of the body, but because symptoms can be vague, such poisoning frequently goes unrecognized. Children age 6 and younger are at particular risk, in part because young children's growing bodies absorb more lead and also because they tend to put things in their mouths, including paint chips, antique toys that may contain lead-based paint, and objects that may

be covered with lead dust from renovations. If not detected early, children with high levels of lead in their bodies can suffer damage to the brain and nervous system; behavior and learning problems, such as hyperactivity; slowed growth; hearing problems; and headaches.

New federal regulations

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is taking action to protect children from the dangers of lead-based paint dust with a regulation that applies to any facility built before 1978 in which children 6 years old or younger

