



## **Hurricane Aftermath—Health and Housing Damaged Lead-Based Paint**

Damaged and deteriorating lead-based paint can be a concern in hurricane impact zones where houses and apartment buildings were built during or before 1978. Damage to lead-based paint can occur during a hurricane from direct physical impacts to the structure, and rapid deterioration of the paint can stem from water intrusion due to flooding or leaks following roof or exterior wall damage. Lead exposure causes a wide range of serious neurological, physical, and behavioral problems, especially in children.

To protect against poisoning from damaged or deteriorated lead-based paint, property owners should take the following steps:

- If a house or apartment building was constructed prior to 1978, property owners should assume that the structure contains lead-based paint.
- Take appropriate measures to dry out the entire structure of the house or apartment building. As soon as safe, reliable power is restored, fans; dehumidifiers; window air conditioners; and undamaged, uncontaminated, properly filtered HVAC systems can be used to dry out a building. All houses and apartment buildings should also have ventilation systems repaired if damaged. Inadequate drying can lead to the rapid deterioration of lead-based paint.
- Avoid all contact with paint dust, and keep children away from areas where paint has been damaged.
- If paint has been damaged, remove it using lead-safe work practices such as wet scraping and wet sanding. Be sure to seal off any areas where repair work is being done, and cover the entire floor with plastic sheeting. Make sure to wear clothing you can dispose of after repair work is completed, and be sure that all areas have been cleaned with hot, soapy water. **Never** use sandblasting to remove paint from houses or apartment buildings constructed before 1978, **never** use heat guns or torches, and **never** use dry sanding or power sanding methods unless the equipment is properly fitted with HEPA-filtered vacuum devices. Where possible, use contractors specifically trained in lead-safe work practices.
- Following any repair, renovation, or remodeling work, ensure the house or apartment building has been properly and thoroughly cleaned, and ensure that a lead dust test has been conducted to ensure that invisible hazards do not remain.

- During any repair, renovation, or remodeling work, temporarily relocate all building occupants to ensure their safety.

### **Resources**

- For more information on making homes healthy following a hurricane strike, visit the EPA's Hurricane Katrina response page, linked from [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).
- The Alliance for Healthy Homes and the National Center for Healthy Housing provide more detailed information on health and housing on their websites, [www.afhh.org](http://www.afhh.org) and [www.centerforhealthyhousing.org](http://www.centerforhealthyhousing.org).