

TOOLBOX TALK #15

DON'T TAKE LEAD HOME

Are you exposed to lead at work? You may be if you make or fix batteries or radiator, make or paint ceramics, melt, cast or grind lead, brass, or bronze, tear down or remodel houses, buildings or bridges, or work with scrap metal.

Short-term lead exposure can cause headaches, irritability, memory loss, abdominal pain and loss of appetite. Prolonged exposure can cause depression, nausea, high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and reduced fertility.

On top of that, you can inadvertently bring lead home. Certain types of work create lead dust or fumes. Because you can't see lead dust, it can get on your hands, face and clothes without you being aware of it. You can take lead dust from your jobsite to your family when you wear your work clothes and shoes home. That lead dust can get in your car and on your furniture, floors and carpets. Your children could swallow lead dust and be poisoned.

This is especially dangerous for children younger than 6 years old. Children who swallow lead dust may develop problems learning and paying attention. The only way to know for sure if your child has lead poisoning is to have your doctor test your child's blood.

Take steps to protect your family from lead poisoning. First, if you're unsure if you're exposed to lead, ask your employer, who is required by law to tell you. If you are, at the end of the workday, change into clean clothes and shoes before leaving. Place your soiled work clothes in a plastic bag. Thoroughly wash your face and hands before leaving work. Next, take a shower (at work, if possible) and wash your hair.

It is also recommended to wash work clothes separate from your other clothes. Empty your work clothes from the plastic bag directly into the washing machine and wash them immediately. Once complete, run the washing machine empty on the rinse cycle to clean it from any lead contamination.