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Occupational Lead Poisoning Prevention Program California Department of Public Health

The Occupational Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (OLPPP) in the Occupational Health Branch of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) was established by legislation in 1991 to provide services aimed at preventing and reducing lead poisoning in California workplaces. We are dedicated to improving the health of workers in California's lead industries through public health prevention activities. In accomplishing this mission we work cooperatively with employers, workers, unions, industry associations, health professionals, community-based advocacy groups, and the public.

What We Do

✓ Track blood lead levels in California workers

We track blood lead levels in adults to help us understand which workers are most at risk so that we can target prevention activities where they will help the most. Universal reporting requires all laboratory results to be reported to CDPH, regardless of the blood lead level (BLL). The program receives approximately 55,000 to 60,000 BLL reports per year.

✓ Investigate cases of lead poisoning in workers and in children exposed to lead brought home from the workplace

When a case of occupational lead poisoning occurs, OLPPP staff interview the employee, the employer, and the health care provider to ensure workers receive appropriate medical follow-up and to identify the conditions in the workplace that resulted in the lead poisoning. Employers are directed to take necessary steps to prevent further lead exposures to other workers and family members.

✓ Provide information, training, and technical assistance

We assist employers, workers, health professionals, and others to take action to prevent work-related lead poisoning. These activities include developing and disseminating educational materials, conducting seminars and trainings, maintaining an up-to-date website, and writing articles for publication. Some recent topics covered include the health effects of lead, requirements of Cal/OSHA lead standards, implementation of a

lead medical program, blood lead reporting regulations, and industry-specific exposure control methods. OLPPP also operates a telephone help line to provide technical assistance and consultation to any caller regarding occupational lead poisoning prevention. We design, conduct, and evaluate public health intervention projects in targeted high-risk industries. In addition, we encourage businesses to go “lead free” by providing technical assistance to employers interested in identifying alternatives to using lead in their methods and manufacturing processes.

✓ **Recommend more protective standards**

Since 2000, we have been actively involved in reviewing the current scientific and medical literature on chronic and low-level lead exposure and toxicity, developing revised medical guidelines based on the new evidence, and preparing and disseminating bilingual information to workers, employers, and health care providers for educational and training purposes. Recently, we submitted to Cal/OSHA our proposed changes to the lead standards (General Industry and Construction).

Program Funding

OLPPP is supported by fees paid by employers in industries where lead is used, altered, or disturbed. The list of 110 “Occupational Lead Poisoning Fee” paying industries is based on a documented history of lead poisoning in each industry. The fees are modest (\$299 - \$3,428) and are based on the number of employees and the fee category (A or B) to which the employer’s industry is assigned. Category A industries have fewer than 20 individuals with an “elevated” blood lead level in the prior three years and pay lower fees. The definition of elevated blood lead level for the purposes of assessing the fee was established by legislation and is 25 µg/dL. It is not dependent on Cal/OSHA regulations. Employers with fewer than 10 employees do not have to pay the fee. In addition, employers in fee-paying industries may request a waiver of the fee if they use less than a *de minimus* amount of lead in a calendar year.

Contact Information

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