



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

7/20/05

OFFICE OF
PREVENTION, PESTICIDES AND
TOXIC SUBSTANCES

The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1306

Dear Senator Obama:

Thank you for your letter of May 9, 2005, to Administrator Stephen L. Johnson regarding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) lead program. Administrator Johnson has asked that the Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances respond to your letter regarding the Agency's efforts to ensure the use of lead-safe work practices by individuals involved in renovation, repair and painting work.

Please be assured that EPA remains committed to protecting the children of this country from the effects of childhood lead poisoning and, along with others in the Federal Government, remains committed to eliminating childhood lead poisoning by 2010. EPA's efforts to date to address concerns related to lead-based paint include issuing hazard standard and real estate disclosure rules, developing a trained and certified workforce to perform lead-based paint activities safely ensuring that unintentional exposures to lead dust are minimized and risks are reduced, and conducting extensive public education and outreach to parents, homeowners, workers and the medical community to increase awareness of the risks of lead-based paint and the steps necessary to reduce these risks.

We believe that the on-going reduction in the number of children with elevated blood lead levels, from 1.4 million in the early 1980's to 310,000 in 2002, demonstrates the success of these efforts. However, even one lead poisoned child is too many and the Agency is committed to continuing efforts to ensure that the number of lead-poisoned children continues to decline. EPA also believes that it is critical to focus our programs on the housing, exposure routes, and activities that most affect children of concern. While EPA has successfully addressed many aspects of the lead problem, there are still areas that require attention, including ensuring the wide-spread use of lead-safe work practices during renovation, repair, and painting projects.

As you may know, the renovation, repair, and painting industry is comprised almost entirely of small businesses and individuals. EPA estimates that roughly a quarter of a million businesses in the U.S. provide professional renovation, repair, and painting services, employing approximately 1.7 million workers. EPA initially examined several regulatory approaches to address the risks of lead-based paint in renovation, repair, and painting activities. EPA also

investigated a range of other options in an effort to identify an approach under the law that would not disproportionately burden America's small businesses, consumers or households. After careful consideration of a number of approaches, including a voluntary program, the Agency determined that a combination program that includes regulation, training, education and outreach would provide the most effective approach.

At the present time, the Agency plans to announce by the end of this year, a comprehensive program that will include a proposed rule, as well as an extensive education and outreach campaign for lead-safe work practices and training, designed to assist the Agency in reaching this unique industry of small businesses and individuals. We also plan to target outreach efforts to expand consumer awareness, which is critical to creating demand for the use of lead-safe work practices. EPA intends to work closely with all interested stakeholders in the coming months as we move toward announcement of this comprehensive program.

Again, we share the concerns you raise and are committed to our mutual goal of reducing childhood lead poisoning. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or your staff may contact Betsy Henry in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-7222.

Sincerely,



Susan B. Hazen
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator