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LEAD: DON'T LET IT AFFECT YOUR CHILDREN!

Scrape, scrape, scrape, bang, bang, bang are familiar sounds, as remodeling and repainting projects begin after the holidays. This new project, however, can bring with it hazards from lead paint that can adversely affect the health of young children in the home.

Lead is a metal used in industry to produce car batteries, chemicals, gasoline, various metal products (solder, pipes, and brass fixtures) bullets and even common household paint in homes built prior to 1978. It was also used in water pipes in homes built prior to 1930.

- *Why worry?* As remodeling and repainting jobs are taking place the dust from lead based paint flies around and paint chips fall everywhere. The dust and chips contain poisonous amounts of lead and are **extremely** harmful to children younger than six years of age who can either breathe in the dust or ingest the chips.
- *What can happen?* Children this young absorb more of the lead particles which can lead to major health problems. Their rapidly developing organs, especially the brain and nerves, are more likely to be affected by lead. If not detected early, lead poisoning can also cause behavior problems, anemia, liver and kidney damage, hearing loss, hyperactivity, sleeplessness, tiredness, decreased appetite, stomach ache, vomiting, developmental delays, mental retardation and brain damage. Lead can even be stored in children's bones where it can stay for up to 20 years before the body releases it.
- *How can I tell if my child has been affected?* Unfortunately, a child may have lead poisoning and not feel or look sick. This is why routine testing is recommended for all young children. Parents, especially those that have recently undertaken a remodeling job on a home built prior to 1978, should ask their child's physician to perform a blood lead test, **immediately**.

Otherwise, The Michigan Department of Community Health recommends testing children at one *and* two years of age or more often depending on their contact with sources of lead.

For more information contact the Environmental Health Division at the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency at 517-279-9561 in Coldwater, 517-437-7395 in Hillsdale and 269-273-2161 in Three Rivers.