THE LEAD-BASED PAINT PRE-RENOVATION EDUCATION RULE

INTERPRETIVE GUIDANCE FOR CONTRACTORS, PROPERTY MANAGERS, AND MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL UNDER SECTION 406(b) OF THE LEAD- BASED PAINT HAZARD REDUCTION ACT OF 1992

PART I

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1. When a home or an apartment unit is re-painted in preparation for a new tenant, is the painting activity always considered a "renovation" for purposes of the 406(b) rule even if no surface preparation activity is performed prior to painting ?

No. The primary determinant of whether a given activity constitutes a "renovation" under the rule is whether that activity disturbs painted surfaces. The practice of recoating painted surfaces in preparation of new tenants would not constitute "renovation" unless accompanied by surface preparation activities (sanding, scraping, or other activities that may generate paint dust). Minor "spot" scraping or sanding can qualify for the exemption from the rule for "minor repair and maintenance activities" if no more than 2 square feet of paint is disturbed on any component to be painted. (See question 5 below for further explanation of that exemption). Washing down of walls or other components prior to painting does not constitute "surface preparation" for purposes of the rule.

2. If the letter of the regulation is strictly followed, tenants in a large apartment complex will receive several notices regarding repairs to common areas every month, sometimes several in a single week. Is there anyway to avoid such duplication?

EPA believes that in enacting section 406(b) of the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992, Congress intended to provide persons residing in both single family and multi-family housing with information needed to protect against exposure to lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards during renovations. In multi-family housing, advance knowledge of location and timing of renovation activities in lobbies, hallways, and other common areas is essential for residents wishing to minimize exposures to lead, especially those residents with young children. At the same time, however, neither residents nor owners/managers are well-served if duplicative notifications are issued repeatedly for essentially similar renovation activities. For this reason, EPA wishes to encourage owners/managers to use one or more of the methods described below to provide residents with needed information in the most efficient manner.

(1) **Category Notices** – When renovation activities fall within distinct categories which are performed on a cyclical or recurring basis (e.g., hallway painting), they may be grouped into a single notice which describes the categories and provides a description of the locations affected. To fulfill the requirement for providing timing information for the renovations, owners/managers may either list the expected starting and ending dates, or employ one of the other methods for meeting the timing requirements described below.

(2) **Bi-monthly Notices** – Section 745.85(a) of the rule requires that notifications be

given no more than 60 days before renovation activities begin. To minimize the number of notices required, owners/managers may group all of the renovation activities expected to occur over a 60-day period into a single notice distributed bi-monthly (every other month). Renovation activities which were expected to occur within a given 60-day period, but which were canceled or postponed, would simply be addressed in the subsequent bi-monthly notice. Including renovation notices in, or as an attachment to, a pre-existing newsletter is acceptable provided that the cover of the newsletter prominently indicates that lead-based paint renovation notices are contained in or attached to the newsletter.

(3) **Descriptions of Renovation Timing** -- Section 745.85(b)(2) of the rule requires that notices contain the "expected starting and ending dates" of the proposed common area renovations. Although providing specific dates is preferable wherever possible, the Agency is aware that unexpected events or circumstances often result in delays and/or cancellations of planned renovation activities. To provide sufficient flexibility without unduly compromising residents' rights to information on timing of renovations in common areas, owners/managers may employ the following terminology to address the following timing scenarios to avoid the needing to issue supplemental notices:

–"On or about" -- acceptable when the expected starting or ending dates occurs one week before or after the date given.

–"Early [insert month name]" – acceptable when the expected starting or ending dates occurs during the first half of the specified month.

–"Late [insert month name]" -- acceptable when the expected starting or ending dates occurs during the second half of the specified month.

–"Ongoing for the 12-month period beginning [insert month name]" -- acceptable when the renovation commences within 60 days of the issuance of the notice and continues throughout the 12-month period. If an interruption of more than 60 days occurs anytime after commencement of such activity, a new notice will be required before the activity may restart.

(4) **Descriptions of Renovation Ending Dates** – Due to the inherent difficulties in estimating the duration of many renovation activities, owners/managers are encouraged to make allowances for unexpected delays when providing descriptions of ending days under Section 745.85(b)(2) of the rule. Any estimated ending date with a rational basis is acceptable.

3. Pamphlet distribution requirements may interfere with prompt responses to maintenance/repair requests. Specifically, the requirement for obtaining a tenant's signature on an acknowledgment of receipt prior to commencement of the work may delay the repairs for a day or more.

EPA believes that potential delays in making requested repairs can be readily avoided either through minor revisions of existing administrative procedures or by employing the "self-certification" delivery procedures enumerated in section 745.85(a)(2) of the rule. [*Regarding the former, an owner/manager may attach or incorporate the required acknowledgment statement into any existing repair request forms, and may distribute a copy of the pamphlet along with the form to all tenants on a one-time basis. Whenever a repair is needed, the tenant would simply fill out a repair request form and acknowledge receipt of the lead information pamphlet at the same time*.] Alternatively, the self-certification provisions provide that a person delivering a pamphlet to a unit where an adult occupant is unavailable for signing an acknowledgment may sign and date a statement attesting to that unavailability and to the delivery of the pamphlet to the unit. Owners/managers are reminded that they may also employ the "emergency renovation operations" exemption under section 745.82 where the needed repairs pose a safety or health health hazard, or threaten significant equipment or property damage. See section 745.83 for the specific definition of this term.

[NOTE: The bracketed language in italics above contains incorrect information regarding timing of pamphlet delivery. Consult the June 25, 1999 Correction and Clarification for amended guidance.]

4. Must notifications for common area renovations be provided to <u>every</u> unit in a multifamily housing complex in all cases?

Section 745.85(b)(2) states that notification of renovations in common areas of multi-family housing "shall be accomplished by distributing written notice to each <u>affected unit</u>." (Emphasis added). In most cases where such renovations are performed, all units in the housing are "affected units" because a common area is, by definition, "a portion of a building that is generally accessible to all occupants." Section 745.103. In some limited instances in large apartment buildings, however, EPA recognizes that certain areas of the building, while meeting the literal definition of a common area, are, in practice, used almost exclusively by an identifiable subset of tenants, e.g., a hallway on an upper floor of a multi-story building. EPA believes that providing notices to every unit in a large building when renovations are occurring in only one such "limited use common area" is unduly burdensome and does not result in appreciable reductions in lead exposures. Therefore, for purposes of this rule, EPA will interpret the common area notification requirements of the rule as follows: First, where renovation activity takes place in an area within a common area which is used almost exclusively by an identifiable subset of residents of a large apartment building, the Agency will interpret the term "affected units" to refer only to those units

serviced by, or in close proximity to, the limited use common area. Second, the term "large apartment building" shall mean multifamily housing with 50 or more dwelling units. EPA believes that need for special treatment for limited use common areas is less compelling when dealing with apartment buildings with fewer than 50 units because (1) the burden of providing notifications to every unit in the building is not unreasonable, and (2) in general, there are fewer areas within smaller apartment buildings which would meet the criteria for a limited use common area designation. Third, to ensure notification of tenants who may enter a limited use common area but are not among the subset of tenants identified for individual notification, the renovator must post placards at all accessible entrances to the renovation work site which prominently conveys the same information required under section 745.85(b)(2).

5. Please provide guidance on how the Agency will interpret the exemption for "minor repair and maintenance activities," e.g., what constitutes a "component"? May the 2 square feet value be aggregated among several components? Does the exemption apply to window replacement activities?

The exemption applies to "minor repair and maintenance activities (including minor electrical work and plumbing) that disrupt 2 square feet or less of painted surface per component." 40 C.F.R. section 745.82(b)(1). The term "component[s]" is defined, in relevant part, in the section 402 rule as

> ". . . specific design or structural elements or fixtures of a . . . dwelling . . . that are distinguished from each other by form, function, and location. These include, but are not limited to, interior components such as: ceilings, crown molding, walls, chair rails, doors, door trim, floors, fireplaces, radiators and other heating units, shelves, shelf supports, stair treads, stair risers, stair balustrades, windows and trim (including sashes, window heads, jambs, sills or stools and troughs), built-in cabinets, columns, beams, bathroom vanities, counter tops, and air conditioners; and exterior components such as: painted roofing, chimneys, flashing, gutters and downspouts, ceilings, soffits, fascias, rake boards, cornerboards, bulkheads, doors and door trim, fences, floors, joists, lattice work, railings and railing caps, siding, handrails, stair risers and treads, stair stringers, columns, balustrades, window sills or wells, and air conditioners." 40 C.F.R. 745.223

The Agency wishes to emphasize several aspects of this exemption which have been overlooked by some readers of the final rule. First, the central tenet of the exemption was that it was designed to apply only to activities which can reasonably be characterized as "minor repair and maintenance." Any over-emphasis on the mechanics of the exemption serves to inappropriately divert attention from the central purpose of the exemption: to provide regulatory relief for those activities which are truly minor in scope. Common examples of the types of activities the Agency

wanted to exempt in the final rule were repairs to electrical outlets and switches, replacement/repair of plumbing fixtures, and spot repairs of painted walls, ceilings, trim, and molding. Second, the exemption was not intended to provide an avenue to circumvent the requirements of the rule; some have questioned the permissibility of dividing up a renovation project into separate sub-projects, each of which disturbs 2 square feet or less of painted surfaces, or of multiplying the number of components in a room by 2 square feet to come up with an overall *de minimis* value . If any aspect of a renovation project results in disturbance of more than 2 square feet on any component in the area renovated, the entire project is subject to the rule. Finally, EPA wishes to clearly state that window replacements do <u>not</u> qualify for this exemption to the rule because (a) the definition of the term "renovation" specifically includes window replacement; and (b) replacement of a window(s) cannot reasonably be classified as "minor repair and maintenance activities."