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National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

United behind a theme of “Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future,” EPA Region 7 is urging parents, teachers and news media representatives to join federal, state and local health and environmental agencies in spreading the message of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 20-26.

While lead poisoning is a health issue that can affect persons of any age, young children are most at risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 4 million households in the U.S. have children living in them at risk of exposure to toxic lead. Nearly half a million U.S. children ages 5 and younger have blood lead levels above five micrograms per deciliter, the reference level at which CDC recommends public health actions be initiated.

Nationally, the most common way that children become exposed to lead is by breathing or swallowing dust or chips of lead-based paint, which is often found in and around housing or child-care facilities built prior to 1978, when lead-based residential paints were banned in the U.S.

In the four states of EPA Region 7—Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska—young children, depending on the communities where they live, also may be exposed to soils contaminated by lead from the area’s past or current lead mining and processing industries.

Lead poisoning can adversely affect nearly every system of the body, but particularly the central nervous system, especially for unborn and young children whose bodies are just beginning to develop and grow. Because lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized. However, lead poisoning is easily diagnosed with simple testing, and in most cases, it can be treated.

In advance of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 20-26, EPA is working to raise awareness of toxic lead hazards and spread information about ways to minimize or prevent exposures to lead. The Agency has a range of free information, outreach materials and other resources available online: <http://www2.epa.gov/lead/national-lead-poisoning-prevention-week>

Throughout the year, EPA works proactively with professionals employed in the home and building renovation and repair trades to encourage their compliance with federal laws and regulations designed to prevent exposures to lead caused by renovation, repair and painting activities. EPA similarly strives to educate homeowners and consumers who do their own renovation, repair and painting, to follow lead safe work practices.

Information about EPA’s Renovation, Repair and Painting Program is available online: <http://www2.epa.gov/lead/renovation-repair-and-painting-program>