

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Summer House Painting: How to Comply with the Law and Keep Children Safe

GRAND RAPIDS – Failing to use lead-safe work practices when repainting pre-1978 housing is a violation of the Grand Rapids Housing Code and, in some cases, is a federal offense according to the *Get the Lead Out!* coalition. The coalition is reminding homeowners that dozens of children are needlessly poisoned by unsafe work practices every year in west Michigan.

“We’ve seen a dramatic increase in the number of complaints about people spreading toxic paint chips around the neighborhood as a result of unsafe work practices,” said Healthy Homes Coalition Executive Director Paul Haan. “In this day and age, it is appalling that people are either unaware of the hazard or that they simply don’t care about the health of children.”

The City of Grand Rapids Housing Ordinance prohibits the use of unsafe work practices such as power-washing homes or dry scraping and sanding. Paint chips must be contained and cleaned-up on all painting jobs on pre-1978 housing. Failure to do so is a civil infraction and can result in a costly fine. Landlords and contractors are subject to further requirements under federal law enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Randi Challendar is a parent who knows firsthand the hazards of unsafe work practices. In 2011, her then 10-month old daughter was poisoned when they lived in a home being repainted by workers who were not using lead-safe work practices. “Had they used safe work practices, my daughter would not have been hospitalized for lead poisoning,” said Challendar. Lead poisoning causes permanent brain and neurological damage in children.

A recent study by the Michigan Department of Community Health revealed that an estimated 40% of children lead poisoned in Michigan are living in older homes undergoing unsafe renovation. “It’s not just landlords who are not complying,” said Haan. “The majority of our most recent complaints are about homeowners who are putting their own children and others in the neighborhood at risk.”

The *Get the Lead Out!* coalition offers monthly classes to teach homeowners, landlords, and contractors how to comply. Loans are also available to hire certified professionals to abate lead hazards.

Learn more by visiting www.GetTheLeadOutGR.org.

Exterior House Painting Fact Sheet

Helpful Resources

Classes for homeowners who will be painting their own personal residence are offered by the Healthy Homes Coalition. All classes will be held at Home Repair Services, 1100 South Division, Grand Rapids MI 49507.

Tuesday, June 26 2:00-3:30pm

July Date TBD

August Date TBD

Classes for landlords and contractors who need to comply with the EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting rule are held by the Rental Property Owners Association. All classes will be held at the RPOA offices, 1459 Michigan St NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503.

June 13 8:00am – 5:00pm

July Date TBD

August Date TBD

Loans and grants for homeowners and landlords who would like to make their properties lead safe are available through the *Get the Lead Out!* Home Repair Program. Eligible properties must be located in the City of Grand Rapids, be occupied by a resident child five years of age or younger (or vacant if rental), and the occupant must be low to moderate income. For more information, visit www.GetTheLeadOutGR.com.

Certification by the US-EPA for landlords and contractors who must be trained and certified before when painting, remodeling or repairing pre-1978 housing. More info at: <http://www2.epa.gov/lead/renovation-repair-and-painting-program>.

City of Grand Rapids Housing Ordinance on Lead-Safe Work Practices.

Chapter 140 – Property Maintenance Code

304.2.1 Loose paint particles

(3) *Remodeling, repair or painting.* Any remodeling, repair or painting of residential structures constructed prior to 1978 is to be conducted in compliance with the Lead Safe Work Practices as established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and/or the United States Office of Housing and Urban Development.