

Newly Proposed EPA Rule Could Cost Homeowners Billions of Dollars

July 18, 2023 - In case you weren't aware, the EPA has proposed a new rule that might make millions of homeowners test their homes for lead dust and, if dust is found, have it removed. The agency is saying that the proposed rule is to protect children from being exposed to this toxic substance. But if implemented, it could cost homeowners billions of dollars.

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According to the EPA, this rule could reduce lead exposures for around 250,000 to 500,000 children under the age of 6 each year. The agency wants to revise the standards for how much lead dust is allowed on floors, window sills, and other parts of older buildings. They aim to make sure that even the smallest amounts of lead dust are considered unsafe for children.

Although lead-based paints were banned in 1978, there are still around 31 million pre-1978 homes in the United States that might have them. According to the EPA, around 3.8 million of these homes have children under the age of 6 living there. Lead exposure can have severe health effects on children, including behavioral problems, lower IQ, and slowed growth.

The proposed rule change could affect many homeowners and child care facilities. They might have to inspect for lead dust and pay for cleaning if they find any. It's estimated that millions of homes, schools, and businesses may need to eliminate lead dust under this plan. Lead removal services can be quite costly, ranging from around \$1,500 to \$5,500 for standard removal, depending on factors like the size of the house. However, in some cases, the cost could be significantly higher.

Any structure built prior to 1978 has lead paint in it and there are numerous sources of data that clearly state that this paint, when painted over and maintained, poses virtually no threat to anyone. Where it does become an issue is when properties are poorly maintained. While it may make sense to enforce a rule such as this on facilities that provide care for children, and perhaps even on older apartment buildings where children live, it would place an unnecessary cost burden on millions of individual homeowners. By the EPA's own data (shown above) young children don't reside in the vast majority of the 31 million American homes that would be impacted. And we know of no adults who are out there eating flaking paint chips.

This newly proposed rule is a result of a lawsuit filed by the Sierra Club and other environmental groups in 2019. They claimed that the EPA's limits for lead-based paint in homes were too high. In 2021, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the environmental groups, stating that the EPA must reevaluate its lead-dust health standards.
by Jim Malmberg

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