



Unit Turnover is Key to Lead Safety

What if someone told you there were four easy steps you could take during unit turnover to protect the health of your tenants, increase your marketing edge and reduce your liability? When it comes to lead in your units, it's true. There are simple maintenance practices that you can easily do to help prevent lead poisoning, make your property stand out and protect yourself from legal trouble resulting from lead poisonings.

Half of all children poisoned by lead in Maine live in rental units. By far, lead dust is the most common way children are poisoned by lead. Lead dust comes from lead paint that was used in most homes built before 1950, and in some homes built between 1951 and 1978.

So, when you get the lead dust out of your units, you can help protect your tenants, especially small children, from lead poisoning. An added bonus: if you remove lead from your properties, you can advertise vacancies as lead-safe, showing your commitment to tenant health and safety. And, by definition a unit that is lead-safe is well-maintained. This can make your property more appealing to prospective renters. In addition, good faith efforts to address lead hazards may help you avoid expensive abatement procedures if one of your tenants is poisoned.

Unit turnover is a great time to address lead because of easy access to property. Further, working on empty units makes cleaning up from maintenance easier and safer. If there are no tenants, there are no people to expose to lead dust created by any repairs or renovations.

Before you start to get the lead out of your property, here are a few things you should know:

1. Paint in good repair is generally safe. But lead paint can turn into lead dust from normal wear.
2. Proper maintenance, cleaning and lead dust testing can help prevent a lead hazard.
3. Take a class to better understand lead-safe work methods. Go to www.maine.gov/dep/rwm/lead to find a class near you.

In between tenants, follow these steps to make your properties lead-safe.

1. Look for peeling and chipping paint every six months.
2. Carefully repair all damaged paint surfaces or potentially hazardous areas.
3. Identify and address any underlying problems, such as moisture or water damage.
4. Thoroughly clean the unit to remove any lead dust from repairs.

Getting the lead out of rental units is in your best interest as a landlord. It only takes a few simple steps—a small price for a big return.

Tipsheets for landlords about maintenance, cleaning and lead dust testing best practices are available at www.maine.gov/healthyhomes.