

Choosing the Right Service: A Lead-Based Paint Inspection or Risk Assessment

Choosing the lead-based paint (LBP) service that is most appropriate for your situation and choosing the right LBP professional to work in your home are very important decisions. According to EPA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as many as 23 million homes nationwide contain LBP. That translates into approximately three-quarters of the nation's housing built before 1978.

If LBP is present in a home and the paint deteriorates, the health of the occupants can be threatened. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that even though lead poisoning is preventable, 500,000 children have elevated blood lead levels. Lead dust can be ingested by hand-to-mouth activities, therefore, children under six years of age are particularly susceptible. Once absorbed into the body, even low levels of lead can cause learning disabilities, IQ deficits, decreased growth, hyperactivity, impaired hearing, behavioral problems, and brain damage. Adults also suffer from many documented negative health effects from exposure to lead.

LBP poses little risk if it is identified and properly managed and maintained. Identification of deteriorating LBP and its potential hazards can be accomplished through two types of evaluations: Inspection or Risk Assessment.

The following are helpful summaries that may aid in choosing between an LBP Inspection or Risk Assessment.

LBP Inspection

An LBP Inspection is typically conducted when one simply wants to determine where LBP is located. It determines if lead is present in paint, at what concentration, and where the leaded paint is found.

An LBP Inspection is beneficial prior to:

- Remodeling, renovation, or repainting
- Weatherization
- Sale of property/turnover
- Abatement of lead-based paint

Lead-Based Paint Inspection or Risk Assessment

The Inspector:

- Measures concentrations of lead in paint through a surface-by-surface investigation
- Determines exact locations of LBP
- Does not determine whether paint presents an immediate hazard
- Does not offer any guidance on lead hazard control
- Does not take dust or soil samples (except in cases of clearance inspections after an abatement is conducted)

LBP Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment is typically conducted when one wants to determine if any potential hazards exist from the presence of LBP. It identifies the presence of any LBP hazards, their source and severity, and recommends options to control those hazards.

Risk Assessments are beneficial in the following cases:

- Interim controls (measures to address LBP without an abatement such as painting, etc.)
- Insurance (documentation of lead status)
- Sale of property/turnover

The Risk Assessor may perform all Inspector duties in addition to the following:

- Focus on deteriorated LBP
- Identify LBP hazards (to include hobbies that may produce leaded dust)
- Consider resident and owner use patterns
- Consider management and maintenance practices that will affect the paint
- Identify the existence, nature, severity, source, and location of hazards
- Present options to control hazards
- May take dust, water, and soil samples

The combination of an Inspection followed by a Risk Assessment, all conducted by one Risk Assessor (who is authorized to perform both jobs), will likely reduce the time spent on evaluations and offer more comprehensive advice. If the home is in good condition and likely does not contain LBP, a limited type of Risk Assessment called a Lead Hazard Screen may be more economical. During a Lead Hazard Screen, the Risk Assessor conducts less sampling but uses more sensitive criteria for hazard identification. If any lead hazards are present, a full Risk Assessment should be performed.

Selecting a Certified Professional

Whether an Inspection or Risk Assessment is chosen, ensure only certified LBP Inspectors or Risk Assessors are hired. Oklahoma state law requires LBP Inspectors and Risk Assessors to be certified by DEQ. DEQ certification ensures that the professional has been trained in proper procedures for Inspections and/or Risk Assessments. Lists of Certified LBP Inspectors and Risk Assessors are on the DEQ website.

More Information

For more information, please contact DEQ's Lead-Based Paint Program at 405-702-4100
<https://www.deq.ok.gov/air-quality-division/lead-based-paint/>