



# Leave lead at work. Prevention manual for construction workers

**Training & Facilitation Booklet**



Reducing lead in the homes  
of construction workers



## How to Use this Booklet

### Introduction

Many people are aware there may be lead in their homes or the environment, but for construction workers, the greatest risk of exposure may be at the worksite. Painters, ironworkers, laborers, and demolition crews working on lead-painted structures can be exposed to lead, but other types of tasks that involve contact with lead also have a high risk of exposure. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to follow a minimum standard for lead safety, but workers themselves play an important role in preventing lead from coming home from work.

### The goals of this Booklet are to:

- 1) Provide background on the health risks of lead to adults and children, and how lead can be brought into the home from work
- 2) Offer best practices when leaving work that reduce the risk of bringing lead home
- 3) Help you to prioritize your own take-home lead prevention goals and create a plan for achieving them

### Booklet Exercise

After reading Background on Lead in Construction, you can use the Take-Home Prevention Wheel, Worksheet, and Plan to identify ways that you might change your work practices to reduce the risk of bringing lead home. This short exercise takes you through some simple steps for prioritizing your take-home lead prevention goals. Finally, space is provided so that you can write down your goals to keep for your records.

## References

Laborers' Health and Safety Fund of North America. (2020). Toolbox Talk: Lead in Construction: Protecting You and Your Family. Washington, DC.



## Background on Lead in Construction

### Where Can Lead be Found?

Lead is a substance found in the earth naturally, but it is also found in old residential paint, in water or soil. It is also commonly found in construction jobs, especially renovation, demolition, and metalwork. If you are exposed to lead at work, you may have lead in your body.

### Lead is Dangerous

Lead is dangerous and causes serious health problems, such as headaches, stomachaches, nausea, tiredness, irritability, high blood pressure, among other problems. Lead is especially harmful to children because they are still growing and their bodies absorb more of it. Children who have even low levels of lead in their bodies may have developmental problems or trouble paying attention. Since there is no safe level of lead, it's important to protect yourself and your family as much as possible.

### How Lead Enters the Body

Lead can enter the body when you:

- breathe in lead dust or fumes
- drink or eat food contaminated with lead dust
- bite your nails or smoke when your fingers are contaminated with lead dust
- put objects such as pens and pencils contaminated with lead dust in your mouth

### What is Take-Home Lead?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has set minimum standards for lead safety in the workplace. However, construction workers still need to be vigilant about preventing take-home lead. Construction workers are a special group of lead-exposed workers because they are often mobile. You may change job tasks, or even job sites frequently, making it difficult to wash up or change clothes before going home. Since you can't see lead dust, you might be carrying lead dust to your home or car on shoes, clothes, skin and hair, and personal items without even knowing it. This can expose household members to lead. If lead exposure is a possibility on your job, it's important to take steps to prevent lead from coming into the car or home.

### Making Changes at Work to Prevent Take-Home Lead

If you are doing any of the jobs that have a high risk of lead exposure, your workplace should have a lead prevention program in place. If your workplace does not have a lead protection program, it will be important to take precautions to prevent exposures as much as possible. If you are concerned about your lead exposures or if your workplace does not have a lead prevention program, please talk to your supervisor.



## Steps at Work for Preventing Take-Home Lead

### Exercise

The goal of the following exercise is to make one or more positive changes to prevent bringing home lead from work. It can sometimes feel overwhelming to try to make many changes at once. For this reason, this exercise leads you through several simple steps to prioritize the changes that are the most important for you and your family. You will use the wheel, worksheet, and plan on the pages that follow.

### 1. Familiarize Yourself with the Wheel

**Note:** The wheel shows 6 different circles showing how it can be possible to make a change to prevent taking lead home from work. Circle headings include clothing, storage, personal protective equipment (PPE), shower, laundry, and vehicle.

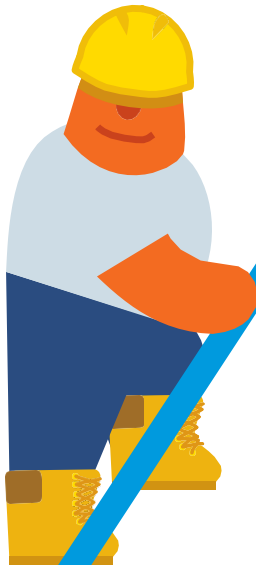
For each circle, there are two headings:

***‘When You Can’*** = the “ideal” situation

***‘When You Can’t’*** = some “good” alternatives depending on your work situation

#### **Action:**

- Go around the wheel starting with #1 and ending with #6. You don’t have to write anything down at this point, but you might find it helpful to make some notes on the wheel.
- Think about what you are currently doing at work for each of the 6 circles. In some situations, you may not be able to do the “ideal” option or any of the “good” alternatives. Remember: the whole purpose of this exercise is to help you identify areas for improvement!



## When you can

- Change clothes and boots at work before getting into a vehicle to go home

## When you can't

- Change shoes before entering the vehicle
- Protect car seats with washable covers, and wash separately from family clothes

## 6. Vehicle



## 1. Clothing

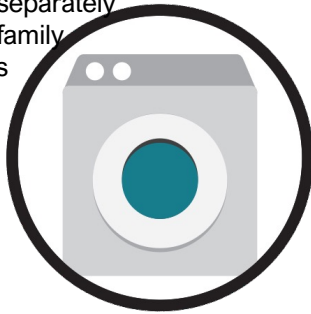


## When you can

- Change clothes and boots at work before going home

## When you can't

- Wear protective outer layer (if weather appropriate) & remove layer, including boots, before going home
- Identify area at worksite or parking lot to change clothes before going home
- Store separately from personal items



## 5. Laundry

### When you can

- Wash work clothes at work

### When you can't

- Wash work clothes at home, separately from family clothes
- When possible, wash family clothes before washing work clothes, and then run an empty washing cycle



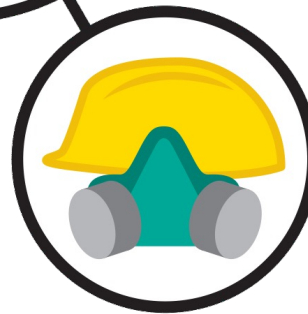
## 4. Shower

### When you can

- Shower at work before going home

### When you can't

- Wash face, hands, & arms at the end of shift using portable washing station or wet wipes



## 3. PPE

### When you can

- Store PPE at work

### When you can't

- Clean PPE and store separately from personal items before going home

## 2. Storage

### When you can

- Use lockers to leave work items at work

### When you can't

- Store work items separately from personal items during work and transport to home
- Identify area in home or vehicle to store work clothing, materials, & tools
- Restrict access to children and pets

# Take-Home Lead Prevention Worksheet

## 2. What Can I Change?

**Note:** The categories on the worksheet on the next page are the same as the ones on the wheel: clothing, storage, personal protective equipment (PPE), shower, laundry, and vehicle.

Column A lists things that you can do in the “ideal” work situation. These actions are not always possible though.

Column B lists things that you can do to prevent take-home lead when the “ideal” action isn’t possible.

**Action:**

- For each of the headings 1-6, check the box if you are currently doing that action to prevent take-home lead. You can check boxes in both columns A and B, depending on your work situation.

## 3. Identifying Goals

- Are there any categories 1-6, where you don’t have any check marks in column A or B?
- Are there any changes that you can make to prevent take-home lead?

**Think About:**

- What is realistic for my work situation?
- What would doing this require?
- When would I do it?
- Would anyone else need to be involved?

**Action:**

- Circle or underline any actions that you think you can change.





**1. Clothing**

- When you can**
- Change clothes and boots at work before going home

- When you can't**
- Wear protective outer layer (if weather appropriate) & remove layer, including boots, before going home
  - Identify area at worksite or parking lot to change clothes before going home
  - Wash work clothes separately from family clothing



**2. Storage**

- When you can**
- Use lockers to leave work items at work

- When you can't**
- Store work items separately from personal items during work and transport to home
  - Identify area in home or vehicle to store work clothing, materials, & tools
  - Restrict access to children and pets



**3. PPE**

- When you can**
- Store PPE at work

- When you can't**
- Clean PPE and store separately from personal items before going home



**4. Shower**

- When you can**
- Shower at work before going home

- When you can't**
- Wash face, hands, & arms at the end of shift using portable washing station or wet wipes
  - Shower first thing when you get home



**5. Laundry**

- When you can**
- Wash work clothes at work

- When you can't**
- Store work clothes separately from personal items during transport to home
  - Wash work clothes at home, separately from family clothes. When possible, wash family clothes before washing work clothes, and then run an empty washing cycle



**6. Vehicle**

- When you can**
- Change clothes and boots at work before getting into a vehicle to go home

- When you can't**
- Change shoes before entering the vehicle
  - Protect car seats with washable covers, and wash separately from family clothes

## Take-Home Prevention Goals & Plan

### 4. Make a Plan

<b>My Take-Home Prevention Goal</b>	<b>How I plan to Accomplish it</b>	<b>Questions/Notes</b>
<p>Write down any goals from the worksheet. (From the most important to the least important to you right now. You may have only 1 or 2.)</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>Wash face, hands and arms at end of shift before going home.</i></p>	<p>Write down one or two things that will help you achieve this goal.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>Add wet wipes to shopping list and store them in the car with plastic trash bag.</i></p>	<p>Write down any questions or notes that you might have.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>Ask supervisor if he'd be willing to install a washing station at the construction site.</i></p>
1		
2		
3		

When you're done with the exercise, your plan should have at least one thing that you're committed to changing, and one thing that you can do to help you achieve that goal.