

EPA REGION 6 – SOUTH CENTRAL

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HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma,
New Mexico, Texas, and 66 Tribes

Helping Kids Learn in a Pollution Free Environment January Is National Radon Action Month

Five Things You Can Do During National Radon Action Month

1. **Test your home** - EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend that all homes in the U.S. be tested for radon. Testing is easy and inexpensive.
 - Learn more about [testing your home](#), including how to obtain an easy-to-use test kit.
2. **Attend a National Radon Action Month event in your area** - Look for radon events in your community.
3. **Spread the word.**
4. **Spend time during National Radon Action Month encouraging others to learn about radon and test their homes.**
 - Tell your family and friends about the [health risk of radon](#). Encourage them to test their homes.
 - [Plan an activity](#) in your community to help raise awareness.
 - Write an op-ed or letter to the editor using samples from the event planning resources.
 - Attract media attention by working with a local official to get a radon proclamation.
 - View EPA's [free radon publications](#).
5. **Buy a radon-resistant home** - Read more about radon-resistant new construction, "[Building Radon Out: A Step-by-Step Guide to Build Radon-Resistant Homes](#)" (PDF).

Learn about Risk from Radon

You can't see, smell or taste radon, but it could be present at a dangerous level in your home or school. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers in America and claims the lives of about 21,000 Americans each year. In fact, the EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General urge all Americans to protect their health by testing their homes, schools, and other buildings for radon.

Exposure to radon is a preventable health risk and testing radon levels in your home or school can help prevent unnecessary exposure. If a high radon level is detected in your home or school, you can take steps to fix the problem to protect yourself and your family.

[Managing Radon in Schools](#)

[Radon Prevention in the Design and Construction of Schools and Other Large Buildings](#) (EPA 625-R-92-016, June 1994)

[Reducing Radon in Schools: A Team Approach](#) (EPA 402-R-94-008, April 1994)

February Is National Pesticide Safety Education Month

During the month of February, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) celebrates National Pesticide Safety Education Month to raise awareness for pesticide safety education and share best practices for using pesticides safely in and around your home.

Reading the label every time you use a pesticide is key to ensuring you are using the pesticide correctly and keeping yourself and your family safe. EPA assesses the risks and benefits of all pesticides sold and distributed in the United States and requires instructions on each pesticide label for how to use the pesticide safely.

Here are more tips to follow for all pesticides:

- Store pesticides in their original containers with proper labels.
- Store pesticides out of the reach of children and pets, preferably locked up.
- Use the amount specified on the label. Using more will not be more effective and may harm you, your loved ones, and the environment.
- Wash hands with soap and water after using a pesticide. Wash clothes that have been in contact with pesticides immediately and separately from other items.
- Don't let children and pets enter sprayed areas while they are still wet.
- Keep pesticides away from food and dishes.

Did you know [disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\)](#) are pesticides regulated by EPA? As consumers, it's easy to forget that common household products like antimicrobials, weed killers and insect repellents are pesticides and should be used with proper precautions.

EPA supports projects like the [National Pesticide Information Center \(NPIC\)](#) to educate pesticide applicators, handlers, and farmworkers on working safely with, and around, pesticides. NPIC has been a useful resource to consumers especially during the COVID-19 public health emergency in developing bilingual disinfectant safety materials and providing guidance to the public on how to use EPA's List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus.

National Pesticide Safety Education Month also recognizes the efforts of land-grant [Pesticide Safety Education Programs \(PSEPs\)](#) as they teach pesticide safety across the country to reach workers and special communities. Through a [cooperative agreement](#) with the eXtension Foundation, EPA supports the work of PSEPs to provide workshops and educational tools to approximately 869,000 certified pesticide applicators in a variety of languages and help them meet certification requirements. An additional 2 million people are reached through pesticide safety education programs, including pesticide educators, farm workers and inner-city and rural communities.

Learn more today about pesticide safety by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides>.

Resources for Head Start and other early childhood programs:

- [Head Start Staff: What You Need to Know about Pesticide Poisoning](#)
- [Pesticides and Their Impact on Children: Key Facts and Talking Points](#)
- [Play It Safe: Reduce Your Child's Chances of Pesticide Poisoning](#)
- [Poison Prevention Checklist](#)

Also see [Reduce Your Child's Chance of Pesticide Poisoning](#) for other tips and resources.

Asthma Management: A Priority for Schools

Asthma is a long-term, inflammatory disease that causes the airways of the lungs to tighten and constrict, leading to wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing. The inflammation also causes the airways of the lungs to become especially sensitive to a variety of asthma triggers. The particular trigger or triggers and the severity of symptoms can differ for each person with asthma.

During 2013, children with asthma aged 5-17 missed 13.8 million days of school per year. Because Americans spend up to 90 percent of their time indoors, exposure to indoor allergens and irritants may play a significant role in triggering asthma episodes. Some of the most common asthma triggers found in schools, as well as techniques to mitigate them, are addressed on this page's section, [Control Asthma Triggers](#).

Each day, one in five Americans occupies a school building. The majority of these occupants are children. Environmental asthma triggers commonly found in school buildings include:

- Cockroaches and other pests
- Mold resulting from excess moisture in the building.
- Dander from animals in the classroom
- Dander brought in on clothing from animals at home.

Secondhand smoke and dust mites are other known environmental asthma triggers found in schools. Children with asthma may be affected by other pollutants from sources found inside schools, such as:

- Unvented stoves or heaters
- Common products including:
 - Chemicals
 - Cleaning agents
 - Perfumes
 - Pesticides
 - Sprays.

In addition, outdoor environmental asthma triggers, like ozone and particle pollution, or bus exhaust, can affect children with asthma while at school.

Students with uncontrolled asthma often miss more school and have poorer academic performance than healthy students. With the help of strong school asthma management programs, students with asthma can have equally good school attendance. When asthma is well controlled, students are ready to learn.

Effectively managing a child's asthma is best accomplished through a comprehensive plan that addresses both the medical management of the disease and the avoidance of environmental triggers. Because children spend most of their time in schools, day care facilities or at home, it is important to reduce their exposure to environmental asthma triggers as much as possible in each of these environments. This publication focuses on steps that schools can take to help children breathe easier.

Check out EPA's resources to learn how to make a difference for students with asthma:

- [Managing Asthma in the School Environment \(PDF\)](#)
- [Help Your Child Gain Control Over Asthma](#)
- [Dusty the Asthma Goldfish and His Asthma Triggers Funbook](#)

Understanding EPA's Lead-Based Paint Dust Rule

Summary

EPA has finalized a rule that creates stronger requirements for identifying and cleaning up lead-based paint hazards in pre-1978 homes and childcare facilities. EPA estimates that this rule will reduce the lead exposure of up to nearly 1.2 million people every year, of which 178,000 to 326,000 are children under the age of six.

What are the health effects of lead exposure?

Lead can affect almost every organ and system in the human body. Lead exposure has the potential to impact individuals of all ages, but it is especially harmful to young children because the developing brain is particularly sensitive to environmental contaminants. In children, lead can cause delayed growth and development, lower IQ, learning problems, brain and nervous system damage, and hearing, speech, and behavior problems. If a pregnant person is exposed to lead, their developing baby can also be exposed. This can cause the baby to be born too early or too small, harm the baby's brain, kidneys, and nervous system, or cause the child to have learning or behavioral problems. In adults, lead exposure can affect the heart and kidneys, and may also cause cancer.

Where is there still lead-based paint?

Although the federal government banned lead-based paint for residential use in 1978, a 2021 analysis estimated that 30.9 million pre-1978 houses still contain lead-based paint, and 3.8 million of them have one or more children under the age of six living there. Communities of color and lower-income communities are often at greater risk of lead exposure because deteriorated lead-based paint is more likely to be found in lower-income areas. Communities of color can also face greater risk of lead-based paint exposure due to the legacy of redlining, historic racial segregation in housing, and reduced access to environmentally safe and affordable housing.

How are lead-based paint hazards identified?

Lead-based paint is usually not a hazard if it is in good condition. However, deteriorating (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking, or damaged) lead-based paint is a hazard and needs prompt attention. Since the use of new lead paint was banned in 1978, any existing lead-based paint in these homes would be at least 47 years old, with some much older than that. While individual homeowners can choose to hire [a certified risk assessor](#) to tell them where any hazards are located, there are several typical reasons that a risk assessment could be performed to determine whether there is a lead paint hazard:

- Property owners, lead-based paint professionals, and government agencies may identify dust lead hazards in residential and childcare facilities built before 1978 after learning that a child living there has a high blood lead level.
- People selling or renting housing built before 1978 must in most cases disclose any known lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards or hazard reports to the purchaser or lessee.
- Property owners who receive federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) must follow additional requirements for investigating potential lead hazards. For example, public housing authorities are required to test for and clean up lead-based paint hazards if the homes are undergoing major renovations. [Learn more.](#)
- Other local or state laws and regulations also require risk assessments to be performed on housing. For example, [Maryland State Law](#) requires that every time the tenant changes, the landlord must ensure that the Affected Property passes a risk reduction lead inspection (which includes passing a lead-contaminated dust test).

What does EPA's rule require if a lead-based paint hazard is found?

EPA's final rule recognizes that there is no safe level of lead in blood. The rule reduces the level of lead in dust that is considered hazardous, when found in homes or childcare facilities, to any reportable level measured by an EPA-recognized laboratory.

The rule also lowers the level of lead that can remain in dust on floors, windowsills, and window troughs after a lead paint abatement occurs to the following levels: 5 µg/ft² on floors, 40 µg/ft² on windowsills, and 100 µg/ft² on window troughs. These are the lowest levels that can be reliably and quickly measured in laboratories, and reflect standards implemented in 2021 by [New York City](#). EPA recommends an abatement when dust-lead levels are above this threshold.

Other government entities, including HUD, state, local, Tribal or territorial government programs, may require lead paint abatements to be performed after a hazard is identified. Local laws might require a landlord to perform lead abatement if lead hazards are identified. For example, after [January 1, 2025](#), New York City's Local Law 123 of 2023 will require building owners to clean up lead-based paint on door and window friction surfaces within three years of a child under six coming to reside in a unit with presumed lead-based paint.

EPA's Lead-Based Paint Activities Program requires individuals and firms performing an abatement to be certified and follow specific work practices. Following an abatement, testing must be performed to ensure dust-lead levels are below the new dust-lead action levels before the work can be considered complete.

Who must pay for cleanup of lead-based paint hazards?

If you own your home, you may be responsible for any cleanup you choose to pursue. If you live in housing funded by HUD, different rules may apply. In some cases, HUD or state, local, Tribal or territorial governments may require landlords or housing authorities to pay for lead abatement. If you rent housing that is not funded by HUD, local laws may require your landlord to pay for abatement.

In October 2024, [HUD announced](#) more than \$420 million in awards to remove lead hazards from homes, including HUD-assisted homes, ensuring the safety of children, residents, and families. This includes \$2 million to remove other housing-related hazards from homes in conjunction with weatherization efforts, and nearly \$10 million to facilitate research on better identifying and controlling lead and other housing-related hazards.

Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

Call and speak with a specialist at the National Lead Information Center Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Eastern time (except federal holidays) at 1 (800) 424-LEAD [5323] or leave a message 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

50 Years of EPA's Automotive Trends Report

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of [EPA's Automotive Trends Report](#). EPA's partnership with the automotive industry was established from the very beginning, as part of the Clean Air Act of 1970 that tasked the fledgling agency with the ambitious goal of reducing car pollution. Since 1975, the Trends Report has been there to provide data, insight, and transparency, covering every new car, SUV, and light duty truck produced for sale in the United States. The report also provides a detailed look at how automotive manufacturers are doing under EPA's current [light-duty greenhouse gas standards](#).

Over time, the Trends Report has evolved, adding new analysis to incorporate the significant changes to the light duty fleet over the past decades. By understanding our history and by setting a common baseline for where we are today, the Trends Report highlights what EPA and the automotive industry have accomplished and provides insight as we drive to the future.

Click on this link for an [interactive infographic](#) that highlights auto trends over the past 50 years. [Text-only version of this infographic](#).

Biden-Harris Administration Issues Final Rule Requiring Replacement of Lead Pipes Within 10 Years, Announces Funding to Provide Clean Water to Schools and Homes

Today, October 8, the Biden-Harris Administration issued a final rule requiring drinking water systems across the country to identify and replace lead pipes within 10 years. The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) also require more rigorous testing of drinking water and a lower threshold requiring communities to take action to protect people from lead exposure in water. In addition, the final rule improves communication within communities so that families are better informed about the risk of lead in drinking water, the location of lead pipes, and plans for replacing them. This final rule is part of the President's commitment to replace every lead pipe in the country within a decade, making sure that all communities can turn on the tap and drink clean water.

Alongside the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements, EPA is announcing \$2.6 billion in newly available drinking water infrastructure funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This funding will flow through the drinking water state revolving funds (DWSRFs) and is available to support lead pipe replacement and inventory projects. Additionally, 49% of the funding must be provided to disadvantaged communities as grant funding or principal forgiveness that does not have to be repaid. EPA is also announcing the availability of \$35 million in competitive [grant funding](#) for reducing lead in drinking water. Communities are invited to apply directly for grant funding through this program. Additional federal funding is available to support lead pipe replacement projects and EPA has developed a [website identifying available funding sources](#).

EPA estimates that up to 9 million homes are served through legacy lead pipes across the country, many of which are in lower-income communities and communities of color, creating disproportionate lead exposure burden for these families. Eliminating lead exposure from the air people breathe, the water people drink, and the homes people live in is a crucial component of the Biden-Harris Administration's historic commitment to advancing environmental justice.

The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements establish achievable, common-sense practices which have been implemented by several states and cities. The public health and economic benefits of the final rule are estimated to be up to 13 times greater than the costs, and together with new funding announced today under Biden-Harris Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, water systems will be able to accelerate removal of lead pipes and create good-paying local jobs in the process.

The science is clear: Lead is a potent neurotoxin and there is no safe level of lead exposure, particularly for children. In children, lead can severely harm mental and physical development, slow down learning, and irreversibly damage the brain. In adults, lead can cause increased blood pressure, heart disease, decreased kidney function, and cancer. If someone is impacted by lead exposure, there is no known antidote, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements strengthen nationwide requirements to protect children and adults from these significant and irreversible health effects from lead in drinking water.

Communities across the country have already begun to tackle lead pipes.

- Milwaukee Water Works is on track to replace all remaining lead pipes within the EPA's ten-year timeframe. In 2024 alone, Milwaukee received approximately \$30 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to replace 3,400 lead service lines.
- The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has received \$90 million from the Administration and will replace more than 8,000 lead service lines this year, putting the city on track to replace all lead pipes in 10 years.
- The Erie, Pennsylvania Water Works has received \$49 million from EPA to enable the city to replace all lead pipes within 5 years instead of 25 years.

- Denver Water has accelerated its efforts through \$76 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, allowing the city to be on track to replace all lead pipes within a decade.

The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements will help protect millions of Americans from exposure to lead in drinking water. EPA estimates that on average, every year after the LCRI is issued it will:

- protect up to 900,000 infants from having low birthweight.
- prevent Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in up to 2,600 children.
- reduce up to 1,500 cases of premature death from heart disease.
- prevent up to 200,000 IQ points lost in children.

Investments in identifying lead pipes, planning for their removal, and replacing them will create jobs in local communities while strengthening the foundation of safe drinking water that supports economic opportunity.

For more information about the final rule, including a pre-publication version of the federal register notice and fact sheets, visit the [rule webpage](#).

National Environmental Education Advisory Council (NEEAC)

The National Environmental Education Advisory Council (NEEAC) is comprised of representatives from organizations other than the federal government who provide EPA with advice on environmental education. The Council provides EPA with a better understanding of the needs of schools, universities, state departments (of education and natural resources) and educational organizations.

NEEAC members:

- Read about the [current and most recent NEEAC members](#) and the [2015 Report to the Administrator](#).
- [Read more about how to apply for open positions on the NEEAC](#).

The Designated Federal Officer for NEEAC is Javier Araujo (araujo.javier@epa.gov or 202-441-8981).

Upcoming Meetings

Members of the public wishing to gain access to the teleconference, make brief oral comments, or provide a written statement to the NEEAC must contact [Javier Araujo](#), Designated Federal Officer, araujo.javier@epa.gov or 202-441-8981, by 10 business days prior to each regularly scheduled meeting.

Meeting Materials and Summaries

- [NEEAC August 2024 Meeting Summary \(pdf\)](#) (220.8 KB, August 22, 2024)
- [NEEAC August 2024 meeting agenda \(pdf\)](#) (267.25 KB)
- [October 2024 Meeting Summary \(pdf\)](#) (261.76 KB)
- [October 2024 Meeting Agenda \(pdf\)](#) (232.38 KB)
- [View NEEAC's meeting and teleconference summaries from 2012 - 2015](#).

For further information, contact [Javier Araujo](#), Designated Federal Officer.

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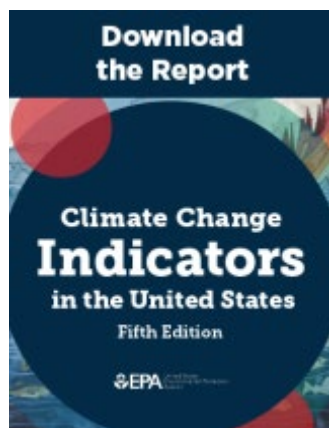


ODDS AND ENDS

UPCOMING NEWSLETTER

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In our next issue, the January 2025 Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter will feature National Groundwater Awareness Week, Fix a Leak Week, Food Waste Recovery Month, Environmental Education Week, and Earth Day.

Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas. Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee for Healthy Schools at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov.

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