



## **Lead testing and abatement in New York City schools, apartments and other buildings**

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Lead paint needs to be tested and removed in schools, apartments and spaces where there are children younger than 6 years old. The theory is that children like to peel paint and chew it - thinking it is candy - and ingest it. Lead is known to be a toxic material which can cause brain damage. Landlords and property owners should be informed of the various rules and regulations for informing tenants and abating for lead in buildings built or renovated prior to 1960. XRS and paint chip methods are the approved methods used to test for lead but the swab method may be used unofficially for initial testing. Once lead is found, stripping the lead paint or removing the windows or doors are two options. There are very detailed and specific laws in NYC/NYS/EPA that apply to schools, day-care centers and apartment buildings. It is very important that you know and abide by these laws.

I would recommend lead testing and abatement for spaces that are accessible to children such as restaurants, movie theaters, stores, offices, medical centers, museums, tourist attractions and concert halls. Any painted surface that has chipping or peeling paint should be tested and repaired. This applies to outside surfaces as well. This also applies to falling paint chips that children can pick up off the floor, especially if it is brown and looks like chocolate. It is better to be safe than sorry.

I have worked on evaluating and recommending lead abatement at a small school. The Health Department requires periodic lead testing. We hired a licensed lead testing company to perform this test with an XRS camera - which is an x-ray device that can sense and measure the presence of lead on any surface. It is measured in a range from 0 to 5 and 1 being the middle and meaning inconclusive. The result came back inconclusive on most of the windows, however a few of them tested positive for lead. I obtained a quote from a lead stripping company who was willing to remove all the paint from the windows, window sills, jambs and doors tested for lead. The price for this was only 10% of the price to replace all the windows. The process of stripping involves sealing off the space and surfaces to protect from lead dust. Each treated surface is painstakingly stripped to the bare surface. Then the paint is discarded in a sealed and marked container and the space is vacuumed with a high vacuum cleaner and wiped down. It is then mopped down. After all is said and done, the Health Department does a final inspection.

A more expensive approach is to remove and replace all the effected doors, windows and surfaces. This is much more expensive and time consuming. Replacing windows is often a good idea any way for energy savings but the initial cost can be stifling to most property owners.

Architects can help manage this project by ordering the lead testing, interpreting the results, making recommendations, preparation of a lead abatement plan, obtaining qualified bids, overseeing the construction and obtaining the required approvals. Designers can be very useful particularly if the building is very large, there are a great many windows, the windows are very large, it is a

landmarked property and one needs special approvals, the windows are custom, there is stripping involved in specific areas and/or for convenience. A layperson may not be able to understand or interpret the lead testing report or put together a comprehensive abatement plan that saves time and money.

The contractor must have a lead abatement license - this is granted by EPA and tests to determine if the contractor knows the codes, removal methods and procedures to minimize and reduce harmful lead dust contamination. Painters and general contractors often have this license because they deal with lead issues on a regular basis. Architects usually have access to competent and licensed contractors to assist you. It is also important to save time by choosing the most reliable and competent contractors since schools and apartment buildings can be closed and/or vacated due to non-compliance and violations. He who fails to plan, plans to fail.

More information is available from these web sites:

[www.architecturestudio.com](http://www.architecturestudio.com)

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/lead03.pdf>

[https://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/nycrr/title\\_10/part\\_67/](https://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/nycrr/title_10/part_67/)

<http://www.nyshcr.org/AboutUs/Lead/>

[https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/laws\\_and\\_regulations/](https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/laws_and_regulations/)

<http://www.nmic.org/nycce/p/documents/lead-training-manual.pdf>

<http://www.nmic.org/nycce/p/documents/lead-training-manual.pdf>

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/lead03.pdf>

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