

# Reaching Out

TRAIL  
HEALTH &  
ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE



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## **FREE SAFETY SUPPLIES and EQUIPMENT are available through the NEW "Work Project Assistance Program".**

If you are doing Renovation, Demolition and Excavation Work in Trail you should know the following:

As a result of over 100 years of smelter operation in Trail, higher than normal levels of lead have accumulated in local soil and dust. Adults are not at risk from general community exposures – there is no history of elevated blood lead levels in Trail adults, unless they have been working in a lead-related occupation. Children under five years old are more susceptible, but experience in Trail shows that exposures even to the susceptible pre-school group can be minimized by controlling smelter emissions, practicing good dietary and hygiene behaviours and covering soil with barriers such as turf, gravel or landscape fabric.

However, if people are doing excavation, renovation or demolition projects, their work may create unusual exposure opportunities. Children need to be protected by minimizing their exposure to dust and soil created by work projects, and by minimizing pregnant women's exposure as well. Others in the

**"Children need to be protected by minimizing their exposure to dust and soil created by work projects..."**

community are usually not at risk, even when exposed to work projects. However, short-term exposure to very high dust levels that can be encountered depending on project conditions and practices could result in elevated blood lead levels in adult workers or residents.



*Protective Safety Equipment is available for FREE to homeowners through the W.P.A. Program.*

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## What does the Work Project Assistance Program Achieve?

The WPAP helps to:

- prevent dust from being blown or tracked outside the work zone;
- protect children and pregnant women from exposure to contaminated dust;
- protect workers from exposure to contaminated dust; and
- ensure that contaminated waste is transported and disposed of in a safe manner and in accordance with regulations.

## What FREE Services does the Work Project Assistance Program Offer?

- Detailed advice on projects – how to control dust and dispose of waste safely
- Use of HEPA vacuum cleaners
- Respirators, disposable coveralls and plastic sheeting
- Use of specialized containment/disposal equipment

## Where does the Work Project Assistance Program Apply?

Included Projects:

**Renovation** – including roofing (particularly involving pre-1997 buildings)

**Excavations** – e.g. driveways, sidewalks, in-ground swimming pools, building foundations

**Demolition**

**Public works & utilities** – e.g. roadways, pipelines

*Work Project Assistance Program Guidelines should always be followed within the City of Trail and Rivervale.*

The WPAP/CMHC guidelines should also be followed when renovating older (pre-1960) homes anywhere, due to the likely presence of lead-based paint. Owners of pre-1960 homes within the entire Greater Trail area (includes Rossland, Warfield, Oasis, Rivervale, Trail, Genelle, Montrose, Fruitvale) will be eligible for applicable WPAP services related to renovations. ●

***If you're planning any renovation, demolition or excavation work***, contact the Work Project Assistance Program at 364-6223 before you begin work. The program is funded by Teck Cominco Metals Ltd. and there are no fees for WPAP services.



*Ron Joseph will be educating local contractors and any interested homeowners about the program at an education session on June 21 at 7:00pm. Anyone wanting to attend this session at Selkirk Collage, Trail in room 208 should contact Interior Health at 364-6223.*

## Fall 2006 Blood Lead Testing *What's Different About This Year?*

For the last several years, Interior Health has offered blood lead testing to children in the Trail area from the ages of 6 months to 36 months (3 years). Research has shown us that children in this age range are most at risk for elevated blood lead levels. Typical childhood behaviors of putting dirty toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouths, cause children of this age group to be more at risk. In addition, children absorb up to 50% of the lead which enters their bodies (a much higher percentage than adults who only absorb 8-10%). The developing brain of a child before birth and in infancy is most at risk from the effects of lead exposure.



*Blood Lead Testing Clinics offer free soap to each participant as well as balloons, stickers, and a chance to win many other great prizes.*

The Trail Health and Environment Committee made the decision that in 2006 the age range tested would include children up to 60 months (5th birthday). These results will

be compared to past blood lead levels of similar age children, to ensure that there continues to be no concern with elevated blood lead levels in this group of children over 3 years. Similar comparative testing has been proposed to occur every 5 years. Testing of this broader age group will also allow better comparison with guidelines and with data from other locations.

All families who have children from 6 months to 60 months (5th birthday) will be contacted by mail in July and August of this year. This letter will inform them about the blood lead testing and encourage them to call for an appointment at 364-6223 if they have not heard

from Interior Health by September 2006. The Trail Health and Environment Committee encourages all families to participate in this important health screening. ●

## Hair Analysis *Is it Worthwhile?*

Had your hair done lately? No, we don't mean getting it cut or styled, but rather having hair samples analysed to assess levels of heavy metals in the body.

Some area residents have had this test done, hoping to help determine whether the symptoms they or their children have experienced might be due to exposure to heavy metals. At the Trail Health and Environment Committee, we've been fielding questions from people who are now concerned because their hair analysis results show extremely high levels of metals.

There are a few things you should know about the reliability and accuracy of hair analysis. Studies over the years have found a great variability in results from the same specimen analysed at different laboratories. For example, a study performed in 2001 showed the exact same samples sent to a variety of certified testing labs produced substantially different results.

So be cautious about determining your exposure to heavy metals or need for treatment solely on the basis of hair analysis results, especially if your medical history,

your likelihood of exposure and your health status put you at low risk. A number of studies have reported patients receiving potentially harmful treatments based on hair analysis, without clear evidence that these were warranted or beneficial.

Sources of contamination from outside the body, like sweat, dust, shampoos, bleaches, hairspray and perms, can alter the concentrations of various elements in the hair. Is the metal that is being tested in the hair really from the body or is it from something in your environment or the products you have used on your hair? Some laboratories use washing techniques to try and lessen the external contaminations, but there does not seem to be a consensus on what type of washing procedure is best.

Hair metal analysis may have benefits in some specific situations. In a research setting, for instance, it might be used to compare methyl mercury levels between two population groups. As a diagnostic tool to assess an individual's exposure to metals, however, it is of questionable reliability and validity.

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Be cautious about using hair analysis to make decisions regarding your overexposure to metals or need for treatment. When it comes to measuring lead exposure specifically, lead in blood is a far more reliable measurement for assessing an individual's

lead exposure because it produces consistent results when comparing identical samples at different laboratories, it can be done with little chance of external contamination, and it can be related to risks of adverse effects in individuals. ●

## What Do Families Need To Know About Lead?

- Good hygiene is the key. Wash your children's hands frequently throughout the day and always before snacks and meals. Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Keep your floors clean by vacuuming and damp mopping. Leave your shoes at the door.
- Wash children's toys frequently, especially the ones your child particularly likes to chew.
- Encourage your child to eat a well balanced diet high in calcium and iron. Garden produce should be washed before it is eaten. Feed young children in a highchair (after you have washed their hands).
- Keep bare dirt areas in the yard to a minimum. Sandboxes are great, especially if they are kept covered when not in use. Wash your children's hands after playing outside.
- When renovating older homes, take special precautions to avoid exposure to lead-bearing dust and paint chips (especially for pregnant women and young children).
- Find out more about the Work Project Assistance Program by calling the Interior Health at 364-6223.

## Ongoing Community Education Projects

- In 2005 the "Lead and your Family's Health" brochure was updated. The brochure is available through the Trail Health Unit, Dr's clinics, Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital maternity ward, and is mailed to new parents.
- Annual newsletter mailed to every household in Trail.
- Radio advertisements throughout the spring and summer on topics such as: lead and nutrition, lead and pregnancy, blood lead testing, and reducing lead in the home and yard.
- Storybook aimed at preschoolers is available to daycare providers through the Child Care Resource and Referral Program.
- Ongoing presentations to community groups such as Building Beautiful Babies and Child Care Resource and Referral Drop in Playgroup.



Valerie Pitman, Health Coordinator, teaches children at the Child Care Resource and Referral Drop in Playgroup about the importance of handwashing in keeping blood lead levels low.

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