

YOUR HEALTH  
YOUR SAFETY  
OUR CONCERN

HOME SAFETY: PART ONE



*Most of us can remember many a weekend spent on some home improvement project or other. It's hard to forget the accidents that happened on those same afternoons—smashed thumbs, falls from ladders, a nail to the foot. On the other hand, it is all too easy to disregard the less noticeable affects of working on or even just living in a house—like breathing asbestos or lead paint. In this segment we cover the hazards of home improvement and outdated materials.*

# Home Improvement

*Do-it-yourself home improvement is fun and will save you money. Know how to get the job done like a professional: safely.*

Before starting a project, make sure you have the bare necessities for any job—a pair of work gloves, sturdy shoes, goggles, and a first aid kit. Tie back your hair and wear clothing that isn't a trip or snag hazard. Your work area should be clean and dry, uncluttered, well-ventilated, and well-lit. Now you're ready to begin.

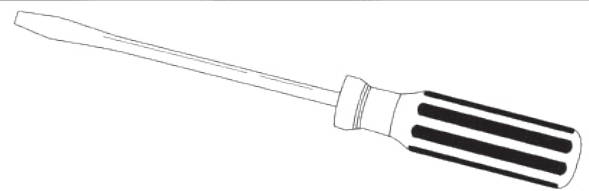


**Take Me Higher:** Ladders are handy for all sorts of projects. Most are built with a load capacity of 200 lbs, which is good to know. When using a ladder, remember to:

- Make sure the ladder is stable.
- Climb with both hands.
- Bring heavy/bulky items up once you've reached the top.
- Avoid leaning or stretching too much.
- Use the 3-point rule—at least 3 extremities in contact with the ladder at all times.

**The Primate Legacy—Tools!:** Tools are half the fun of any project. Treat them right and they'll do the same for you.

- Make sure the tool matches the job.
- Use gloves, eye, and ear protection as needed.
- Only use tools in good condition, with all parts fully-operational. Dull or rusted tools can be dangerous... and frustrating.
- Read the owner's manual and keep it handy.
- Use the shortest extension cord possible; long cords are more likely to overheat.
- Make sure power tools are grounded or double insulated.
- Use a carrying pouch for sharp tools instead of your pocket.
- Once finished, clean your tools and store them in a toolbox, rack or shelf out of the reach of children.



## Get the Lead Out

Lead paint is a major source of lead poisoning for children and adults. In children lead poisoning can mean irreversible brain damage, impaired mental functioning, and hindered development; adults may experience poor muscle coordination, nerve damage, and fertility problems. In light of these serious consequences, it is important to screen for lead poisoning, especially in the case of children. Those living in communities where buildings are old and dilapidated should be especially vigilant. Children are usually exposed to lead by eating paint chips; however, lead dust from deteriorating surfaces can also pose a significant hazard.

Legislation requires landlords and homeowners to disclose information about lead-based paint to new buyers and lessees prior to the sale or lease of housing built before 1978. The requirements include giving the buyer/lessee an information pamphlet, divulging the locations of lead-based paint, handing over records of any control measures employed, and a grace period of 10 days for buyers to conduct a hazard assessment. If you did not receive any information on lead-based paint when you bought or leased pre-1978 housing, call 1-800-424-LEAD.

If you have lead-based paint, these are some ways to reduce your exposure:

- Remove the lead paint. This must be done by a professional to prevent lead contamination from dust and paint chips.
- Replace the painted item.
- Cover the paint with sealant.
- Clean the painted area regularly with an agent containing at least 5% phosphorous.
- Keep your child from playing in bare soil unless you know it is lead-free.

## Asbestos

Today we now know that breathing high levels of asbestos fibers can cause lung cancer, abdominal cavity cancer, and asbestosis—a scarring of the lungs with fibrous tissue. However, up until the 1970s many building products and insulation materials contained asbestos, which was used as a strengthener, an insulator, and to confer fire resistance. A few of these products include:

- Steam pipe, boiler, and furnace duct insulation.
- Cement sheet, millboard, and paper insulation around furnaces and wood-burning stoves.
- Resilient floor tiles and tile adhesive/backing.
- Door gaskets in furnaces, wood stoves, and coal stoves
- Soundproofing or decorative material sprayed on walls and ceilings.
- Patching and joint compounds for walls and ceilings.
- Roofing and siding shingles

If you have asbestos-containing materials (or suspected ones) AND they are in good condition, you can usually let them be. Just keep a sharp eye out for wear and tear. As soon as the suspect materials show signs of breaking down, call an asbestos professional. No matter what, do not attempt any kind of asbestos repair or removal on your own—always hire a professional.

For more on project safety, lead paint, and asbestos, check out:

[dmoz.org/Home/Home\\_Improvement/Safety\\_and\\_Security/](http://dmoz.org/Home/Home_Improvement/Safety_and_Security/)

[www.epa.gov/region02/health/leadpoisoning.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region02/health/leadpoisoning.htm)

[www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html)