Testing for lead based paint

Where painted surfaces pre date 1980, or where it can be reasonably assumed lead-based paint products could have been used, testing should be undertaken. This would be a normal function of the PCBU identification of hazards process, painting contractors undertake under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. In some instances, lead based primers such as Calcium Plumbate have been used well into the 1980s and then coated over many times with non-lead based paint products such as acrylics.

There are two simple tests that can be undertaken to determine if lead is present in old paint coatings.



When using these test systems, it is imperative to follow the instructions and guidelines supplied by the manufacturer of the test system including all safety procedures.

- **Sodium Sulphide-** This product can be purchased from most paint stores. When the liquid is applied to a chip of the existing paint the chip of paint will turn black or dark brown in colour if lead is detected. If lead is not detected no colour change will occur.



- **3M Lead Check sticks –** Can also be purchased from most paint stores. This test method relies on using a two-pack liquid system inside a glass ampoule. The ampoule is crushed and the chemicals mixed and then rubbed on a prepared surface. If the tested area shows a red/ pinkish result then lead is detected. If lead is not detected no colour change will occur.

These types of test kits are known as colour metric tests as the tested chips change colour when lead is detected. These tests provide an indicative result only and do not provide an answer of how much lead is present or in what coat of paint the lead indication is from. The tests are reliable, when carried out correctly, relatively inexpensive to purchase and can be carried out by people with limited training.

All preparation and painting works should be in accordance with AS/NZS 2311:2017 Guide to the painting of buildings and where lead can be assumed AS/NZS 4361.2:2017 Guide to hazardous paint management

Master Painters NZ Association PO Box 40 355 Upper Hutt 5045 - Ph: 04 472 5870
Email: masterpainters@masterpainters.nz www.masterpainters.co.nz