

The Next Chapter on Lead – Turning the “Fallout” into Opportunity!

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I will not rehash what you already have heard regarding the new EPA regulations taking effect on April 22, 2010. The RRP Rule was enacted in 2008. What has changed is EPA's resolve to protect children under the age of six years old and pregnant women from exposure to lead as a consequence of remodeling projects.

Part of the EPA's resolve is shown by the size of the fines involved for infractions: \$37,500 per day, per violation! You might say: "There is no way EPA has the personnel to enforce these new regulations." You would be right about that! However, local governments are expected to play the role of "informants", which opens the door for the angry neighbor, the "busy bodies" or the scorned competitor to become "whistle-blowers" when they see infractions, not to mention your own client. For reasons of self-protection alone, we as painting contractors, ought to take the new EPA regulations very seriously and adjust our work practices to meet the new standards. Protecting our clients, employees and the environment from lead dust is good business!

Well, you might say: "This thing will just blow over. I will wait." The EPA has already indicated that they will not let up on the issue and intend to ratchet up the pressure. For ex-



ample, there is currently an "Opt Out" option in the new regulations for the owners of non-child-occupied housing. The EPA has already indicated

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its intent to terminate that option in the near future.

I have mentioned self-protection already. In my opinion, here is a more powerful motivation: self-interest! The new EPA regulations are a blessing in disguise for the painting industry! Anything that helps painting to be perceived as something that "not everybody can do" is a good thing! Pre-1978 housing is a marketing opportunity for painting contractors. By being ahead of the curve, we can gain a competitive advantage with prospective clients who value safety, doing the right thing and being good to the environment. Are those not the clients we all want anyway? Additionally, we can get paid for doing the additional work. Lead-safe practices help us further justify the higher prices we already charge our customers!

What you need to do is act quickly to take advantage of this window of opportunity. You need to become certified as a "Lead-Safe Firm". You then need to get some of your people certified as "Renovators" and you need to train the rest of your employees in lead-safe practices. You will also need to invest in some new supplies and a few pieces of new equipment. The expected return well justifies the investment. ■