THE NEW EPA LEAD DUST WIPE STANDARDS

What changed — and what it means for homes, childcare facilities, property owners, and contractors

PGH LEAD TESTING SERVICES

Why lead dust matters

Lead dust can be present even when a room looks clean.

INVISIBLE

Lead dust may be too small to see and can settle on floors, windowsills, toys, and furniture.

EASY TO SPREAD

Deteriorating paint, friction, and renovation work can create or spread contaminated dust.

CHILDREN AT RISK

Young children can swallow dust from their hands and objects; lead exposure can harm development.

Dust wipe sampling can identify contamination that a visual inspection alone may miss.

New post-abatement dust action levels

Required levels for applicable post-abatement testing beginning January 12, 2026, in EPA-administered jurisdictions.

SURFACE	PREVIOUS LEVEL	NEW ACTION LEVEL
Floors	10 µg/ft^2	**5 µg/ft^2**
Interior windowsills	100 µg/ft^2	**40 µg/ft^2**
Window troughs	400 µg/ft^2	**100 µg/ft^2**

Lower action levels mean more thorough cleaning and, when needed, recleaning and retesting.

Two important changes

The rule distinguishes identifying a dust hazard from checking cleanup after abatement.

REPORTABLE LEAD DUST

For floors and interior windowsills, **any reportable level** of lead detected by an EPA-recognized laboratory can identify a dust-lead hazard.

Recommended Action: HEPA vacuum floors, furniture, and other surfaces in the area, wet mop and wet dust using disposable wipes and mop pads, clean regularly, identify source of lead dust and remediate.

POST-ABATEMENT LEAD CLEARANCE

After qualifying lead abatement, dust wipe results are compared with stricter action levels to determine whether cleanup meets the required standard.

If dust wipe samples do not pass the new action levels, the lead risk assessor needs to determine the cause of the lead dust and report it to the contractor who will need to remediate the problem and perform additional cleaning until the dust wipe samples pass the new action levels.

LEAD INSPECTION & RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

PITTSBURGH LEAD TESTING SERVICES

Primary areas where lead is found in homes and what to look for

Lead risk assessment: start with the scope

BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

- Confirm the client's goal: risk assessment, lead-based paint inspection, or a combined evaluation.
- Confirm the property type, age, units/buildings included, and applicable program or funding requirements.
- Request prior reports, renovation/abatement history, maintenance records, and known lead concerns.
- Ask about children under age 6, pregnancy, resident use patterns, and any elevated blood lead level investigation.
- Agree on access, sampling scope, deliverables, schedule, and fees.

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

A risk assessment identifies lead hazards and recommends controls.

A paint inspection identifies the presence and location of lead-based paint, including paint that may not currently be hazardous.

A combined evaluation can answer both questions.

A child with an elevated blood lead level may require a more specific investigation protocol.

On site: interview and visual assessment

INTERVIEW & PROPERTY HISTORY

- Speak with the owner/agent and, when appropriate, occupants.
- Ask where children spend time, play, sleep, and enter/exit the home.
- Review recent painting, repairs, renovations, water leaks, and prior lead work.
- Note cleaning practices, maintenance concerns, and known exposure concerns.

VISUAL WALK-THROUGH

- Inspect interior and exterior painted surfaces for peeling, chipping, chalking, or other deterioration.
- Look at friction/impact surfaces: windows, doors, stairs, and trim.
- Check for chewable surfaces, visible dust/debris, moisture problems, and damaged building components.
- Identify bare soil, dripline areas, play areas, porches, and common areas as applicable.

XRF Lead Paint Inspection

XRF Lead Paint Inspection

• An XRF lead paint inspection generally takes approximately 2–3 hours depending on the size of the home/property and can provide the owner/occupant with 100's of results in a short period of time compared to collecting paint chip samples.

• I generally test all accessible components with paint, stain, varnish, or glaze throughout the interior, basement, and exterior components accessible from ground level. Within each room, I typically test all four walls, baseboards, windows and window components, doors and door components, closets, floors, fireplaces, and other painted or coated components as applicable.

• The XRF device provides a non-destructive method of determining the concentration of lead in a surface coating. It reads through multiple layers of paint, similar to an X-ray, and can even detect lead through materials such as faux wood paneling or wallpaper.



Common components/items found to be coated with lead paint/glaze





Common components/items found to be coated with lead paint/glaze





Common components/items found to be coated with lead paint/glaze





Common components/items found to be coated with lead paint/glaze





Common components/items found to be coated with lead paint/glaze





Build the sampling plan

DUST WIPE SAMPLING

• Select locations based on room use, likely child contact, entryways, and visual findings.

• Common locations include floors and interior window sills; window troughs may be included when required by the protocol or assessment purpose.

• Use documented sampling procedures, measured areas, and clean technique to avoid cross-contamination.

• Dust wipes are used to measure settled dust-lead - not to identify the paint source by themselves.

OTHER TESTING — WHEN APPROPRIATE

• Soil: consider bare soil, play areas, and dripline areas where lead contamination may be present.

• Water: not a routine component of every lead paint risk assessment; include it when separately scoped or when plumbing/water concerns warrant it.



Provide a clear, actionable report

WHAT THE REPORT INCLUDES

- Property and client information, scope, limitations, and applicable protocol.
- Background information and summary of the visual assessment.
- Sampling locations, methods, sample IDs, analytical results, and relevant quality-control information.
- Maps, photos, tables, and a clear description of each identified hazard.
- Specific recommendations, including locations and corrective actions.
- Laboratory reports and supporting documentation as attachments.

FOUR PRIMARY TYPES OF LEAD REMEDIATION OUTLINED IN THE REPORT:

- Paint film stabilization
- Encapsulation/Enclosure
- Component removal and replacement
- Paint removal

DIY LEAD HOME TEST KITS
VS
PROFESSIONAL TESTING





PGH
LEAD
TESTING
SERVICES

DIY lead test kits

Consumer kits sold online or at hardware stores are not the same as a professional lead inspection and often provide false results

WHAT THEY CAN DO

- Often use a color change to indicate possible lead on the small area tested.
- Are relatively inexpensive and provide a quick result.
- May be a preliminary screening step when used exactly as directed.

IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS

- Usually give a yes/no indication—not a reliable measurement of lead concentration.
- Results can be affected by the paint, surface, technique, and interpretation.
- In my personal experience, they produce **false positive** results.

WHAT A KIT CANNOT REPLACE

- It does not map all painted components or establish the location and extent of lead-based paint.
- A negative result does not reliably rule out lead throughout a home.
- A paint test swab is not a dust-wipe test and cannot determine quantitative lead dust results.

EPA RECOGNITION IS LIMITED

EPA recognizes specific kits only for defined uses and eligible trained professionals—not every kit advertised online.

Professional testing: XRF vs. laboratory analysis

Both methods can be appropriate; the right method depends on the question being answered.

XRF INSPECTION

- A trained professional uses a portable X-ray fluorescence analyzer.
- Can test many painted components in place, often without damaging the paint.
- Provides accurate on-site readings and helps identify where lead-based paint is present.

LABORATORY ANALYSIS

- A sample is collected and analyzed by a qualified laboratory.
- Paint chips can be analyzed for lead content; labs can also analyze dust wipes, soil, or water.
- Dust-wipe analysis reports lead loading, commonly in $\mu g/ft^2$, for comparison with applicable standards.
- Requires careful collection and lab turnaround time.

THE KEY DIFFERENCE **XRF helps map lead-based paint across components. Laboratory analysis measures lead in the submitted sample. For dust-lead hazards and post-abatement clearance, use properly collected dust wipes analyzed by an EPA-recognized/NLLAP laboratory, following the applicable protocol.**

Professional Opinion – Best DIY home test kit



Fluoro Spec Lead Test Kit

- How it works: The testing liquid transforms lead into a synthetic mineral, the flashlights UV light will turn bright green so you can see where lead is present
- Can be used to test paint, dust, plumbing, dishes, jewelry, etc.
- Provides positive readings with a green glow, not quantitative results.