

Think Lead Isn't Serious? Think Again.

It's déjà vu all over again: Former USW President George Becker led the successful fight in the 1970s to force OSHA to act on reducing workplace exposure to lead. Now, 30 years later, courtesy of our global economy, lead is back. It's in Boy Scout merit badges. It's in lipstick. It's even in kids' cups. But, what does it really mean for lead to be back in such a big way? What does it mean for the child that chews on a toy coated in lead paint? What does it mean for the overseas worker who made that toy?

While adults and kids are both impacted, children are particularly susceptible to lead. They are more likely to put their hands or other objects with lead on them in their mouths. Their bodies absorb more of the lead, and their nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects.

High levels of lead in children that go undetected result in:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system,
- Behavior and learning problems (such as hyperactivity),
- Slowed growth,
- Hearing problems,
- Headaches, and
- Even death.

The impact of lead on adults include:

- Difficulties during pregnancy,
- Other reproductive problems (such as decreased capacity and birth defects),
- High blood pressure,
- Digestive problems,
- Nerve disorders,
- Memory and concentration problems, and
- Muscle and joint pain.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency's National Lead Information Center

To find out what you can do right now on this issue, please visit: www.usw.org