

Health Beat

Lead Lurking Up on the Husetop

Are you planning to re-roof your home this year? If you are, and if you live in East Helena, be aware that roofing shingles are considered to be a reservoir for lead-contaminated dust. Here are some things you can do when removing shingles to protect children in the vicinity from lead:

1. Keep children and pets away from the construction area until the project is complete.
2. Place a protective barrier (i.e. tarp or plastic sheet) between the lawn or soil and the shingle debris.
3. Take off your work boots or shoes before entering your home.
4. Wash your hands before holding or playing with babies or children.
5. Wash your work clothes separately from children's clothes.
6. Securely wrap potentially contaminated shingles in plastic and dispose of them.

Properties that have been remediated for lead in the past may be recontaminated if you put the old shingles directly on the lawn or soil. Be sure that a protective barrier covers the entire area of construction.

If you have any questions concerning how to keep your children safe during construction, call either Jan or Debb at the East Helena Lead Program, 457-8583.

Flu Season Hits Early and Hard; Shots Still Available

According to state and local public health authorities, flu vaccine is still available. They recommend vaccination for nearly everyone older than six months. Young children, seniors, and those with chronic medical conditions are most at risk for complications from flu.

Annual vaccination is the safest and most effective way to prevent the flu. The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department holds walk-in immunization clinics on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1930 Ninth Avenue. No appointment is necessary. Immunizations are provided on a sliding-fee scale for those who qualify, and insurance providers can be billed.



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

Winter 2013

Frequently Requested Phone Numbers and Websites

- East Helena Lead Program:
406-457-8583
- Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department and Cooperative Health Center:
406-443-2584
www.lewisandclarkhealth.org
- City of East Helena:
406-227-5321
- EPA: 406-457-5000
<http://www.epa.gov/lead/>
- Consumer Product Safety Commission: 800-638-2772
www.cpsc.gov
- Centers for Disease Control:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality:
www.deq.mt.gov
- Air Quality 24-hour Hotline:
406-447-1644
- East Helena School District
406-227-7700
www.ehps.k12.mt.us



Lead Program
P.O. Box 1231
East Helena, MT
59635

How to Tell When to Clean Your Chimney

There is no simple rule of thumb on how often to clean your chimney. The problem is, creosote can form when wood is burned incompletely. A smoky fire without enough oxygen emits lots of unburned tar vapors that can condense inside the flue and stick to it, possibly leading to a chimney fire. You can reduce creosote buildup in your fireplace by providing adequate combustion air, which will encourage a hot, clean-burning fire.

To check for creosote, first make sure there's no downdraft from the chimney. If you feel an airflow, open a door or window on the same floor as the fireplace until the downdraft stops or reverses and air flows up (tape tissue to the fireplace opening and watch its movement). Then, while wearing goggles and a basic disposable dust mask, take a strong flashlight and your fireplace poker and scratch the black surface above the damper (smoke chamber). If the groove you scratch in the creosote is paper thin, no cleaning is needed. If it's 1/8 inch thick, schedule a cleaning soon. If you have 1/4 inch of creosote, do not use the fireplace again until it is cleaned—a chimney fire could occur at any time.

Be sure to check the top of the firebox, the smoke chamber and around the damper. Check the flue, too, especially on exterior chimneys, where creosote builds faster than on interior chimneys because of lower outside temperatures.

You could try to remove creosote yourself, but for a thorough job, call a chimney sweep who's certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America. Make sure the sweep you hire (\$150 to \$200) does more than push a brush. A chimney sweep needs to be knowledgeable about building codes, trained to recognize deterioration or venting problems and able to advise you regarding the chimney's condition. And the National Fire Protection Association recommends that chimneys, fireplaces and vents be inspected at least once per year.

Tip:

Save money and avoid a long wait by having your chimney inspected and cleaned in the spring.

The East Helena School Board scheduled a meeting Jan. 28 to hear public comments on whether a new high school should be built in East Helena. The community continues to see growth in its schools, and many parents would like to see their children stay in the East Helena area for high school rather than go to Helena.

If you were not able to attend the meeting, the minutes will be posted at www.ehps.k12.mt.us. Call the school district at 227-7700 for more information.

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