



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

**306 E. Main
East Helena 59635
Ph: 406-457-8583
Fax: 406-457-8573**

LEAD EDUCATION AND ABATEMENT PROGRAM

Summer Projects

It's that time of year again and those summer projects are right around the corner. If you are planning on landscaping, building a new home or just adding an addition to your present home, the Lead Education and Abatement Program (LEAP) would like to remind you of the soil regulations that are in place in the East Helena Superfund Area in Lewis and Clark County.

These regulations apply to all persons engaging in soil displacement in excess of one cubic yard (about ½ a pickup load) within the Administrative Boundary exclusive of tilling when no soil is removed from the parcel. Tilling means to prepare land for the raising of crops as by plowing or harrowing, or to cultivate or dig with a rototiller as in gardening. Anyone who is disturbing or removing more than a cubic yard of soil, exclusive of tilling, is required to be certified and may need to fill out a Soil Displacement Permit. The certification and Soil Displacement Permit are free and can be completed usually within 30 minutes. LEAP staff can come to your home or you can stop by the LEAP office in City Hall, at 306 E. Main Street, Room 201, in East Helena to receive the certification training and fill out the needed paperwork if a Soil Displacement Permit is required. The Soil Regulation (which includes the Administrative Boundary area) and the Soil Displacement Permit are available in the LEAP office or on the Lewis and Clark County website at: <http://www.lccountymt.gov/health/environmental-services/lead-education.html>

If you have a gardening project planned you do not need certification or a Soil Displacement Permit but we would like to offer the following gardening tips:

- If possible, construct a raised bed with safe materials (do not use treated lumber, treated railroad ties, or salvaged painted wood) with 24 inches of clean soil separated from native soil by a barrier such as landscape fabric.
- The two most common ways that humans are exposed to lead from gardening are:
 - ✓ Ingestion of soil while gardening. This risk can be reduced by wearing gloves while gardening, washing hands thoroughly after gardening, and limiting children's exposure to the soil if they are helping with gardening tasks.
 - ✓ Ingestion of soil tracked into residence. This risk can be reduced by removing footwear used for gardening before entering the house.
- Studies have shown that lead does not readily accumulate in the fruiting parts of vegetable and fruit crops (e.g., corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, strawberries, and apples). Higher concentrations are more likely to be found on leafy vegetables (e.g., lettuce) and on the surface

of root crops (e.g., carrots). A good rule of thumb is to wash all produce well before consuming. Discard the outer wrapper of leaves before washing and peel all root crops.

To minimize any potential absorption of lead by plants:

- Keep the pH level above 6.5. Lead is relatively unavailable to plants when the soil pH is above 6.5 and has high phosphorus levels.
- Add organic materials (compost, manure, leaves, and grass clippings) to your garden. Organic compounds bind lead and make it less available to plants.
- Add mulch to the garden to reduce dust and soil splash-back onto crops and therefore reduce exposure.
- Locate your garden as far away from busy streets or highways and older buildings as possible. If someone nearby is removing paint or doing home renovation, cover your entire garden with canvas to catch the paint chips and dust. Remove after the work is completed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to stop by the LEAP office in City Hall, 306 E. Main, Room 201 in East Helena, or call Debb or Jan at 457-8583.