Lead – Protect Yourself from Lead Exposure Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. **Inhalation During Work:** Cutting, sanding, or demolishing lead-painted surfaces can release airborne lead dust that workers inhale during renovation or industrial tasks.
2. **Hand-to-Mouth Transfer:** Handling lead-containing materials without gloves or eating/drinking on the job can result in accidental ingestion of toxic particles.
3. **Contaminated Clothing:** Wearing work clothes home without changing or laundering separately can expose family members to lead dust.
4. **Improper Respiratory Protection:** Not using approved respirators during demolition, painting, or battery recycling allows lead particles to be inhaled directly.
5. **Inadequate Ventilation:** Performing lead-related tasks in enclosed spaces without proper exhaust or filtration systems increases airborne concentrations.
6. **Poor Housekeeping:** Failing to regularly clean floors, tools, or surfaces in work areas contributes to lead dust accumulation and secondary exposure.

STATS

- In 2024, OSHA recorded 5,190 workplace fatalities, with lead-related fatalities rare (<0.5%) but tied to chronic exposure or secondary injuries (e.g., falls from neurological impairment). Proper PPE and hygiene practices could prevent most incidents, per NIOSH.
- In 2024, Lead Standard violations (29 CFR 1926.62) were among the top 10 in construction (1,200 citations), often due to inadequate respirators or protective clothing. PPE violations (29 CFR 1910.132) ranked 6th (1,876 citations), and Hazard Communication violations (29 CFR 1910.1200)

ranked 2nd (3,200 citations).

- A 2022 NIOSH study found that 15% of construction workers handling old paint or contaminated soil were exposed to lead above the PEL, with 20% lacking adequate protective clothing or respirators.
- WorkSafeBC reported 25–30 annual fatalities in British Columbia (2020–2023), with lead-related incidents rare (<1%) but tied to chronic exposure. PPE and hygiene are critical.
- CCOHS 2023 data showed that workplaces enforcing respirators and protective clothing reduced lead-related injuries by 20%, particularly in renovation or landscaping tasks.
- In 2024, Ontario introduced fines up to $500,000 for repeat OHS violations, including PPE non-compliance, impacting firms failing to provide proper protective clothing for lead exposure.