Painter Safety Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

Painters encounter a variety of hazards in their work – from the chemicals they use, the environments in which they work and the conditions under which they work.

What’s the Danger

COMMON SET OF HAZARDS FACING PAINTERS

- Working at heights.
- Ladders, platforms and scaffolds.
- Working in confined spaces.
- Risk of eye injury.
- Slips, trips and falls.
- Risk of injury from falling objects.
- Exposure to moulds, fungi.
- Exposure to bird droppings.
- Exposure to paint products, solvents, toxic substances.
- Proximity to flammable or combustible materials.
- Working in awkward positions.
- Lifting heavy or awkward objects.
- Noise.
- Exposure to heat, radiation.
- Stress.
- Electrical hazards.
- Shift work.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PRINCIPAL HEALTH HAZARDS FOR PAINTERS

Lead-based paint: Lead is a dangerous substance. If swallowed or inhaled, lead can have some very serious health implications.

Lead is no longer used in today's paints, but it may be present in properties constructed before the 1970s. Take due care if painting in a building or home built in that period.

- When a surface is in a good state and has already been protected against lead, it is advisable to leave it undisturbed.
- If you are working on the exterior of an old home and the paint is peeling and flaking, do NOT sand, brush or scrape it. Pick up a lead testing kit to check for presence of lead. Lead testing kits are reliable and inexpensive. You can buy them in some home improvement stores and paint stores. If the paint store does not carry them, they can special order them for you.
- In order to be absolutely certain about a surface containing lead-based paint, the old paint chip should be sent to be tested in a special lab.

Dermatitis: Inhalation and ingestion of certain chemicals can cause health problems. The painting industry may expose workers to skin conditions such as dermatitis and work-induced skin irritations. Painters are generally exposed to chemicals and skin damage more than other trades. The common substances that cause painters to contract dermatitis include paints, solvents, chemical cleaners and strippers, epoxies and other resins.

Asbestos: One substance that we need to be cautious about is asbestos. Breathing asbestos dust can cause serious damage to the lungs and lead to cancer. There aren't very many cures for asbestos related diseases.

Any materials containing asbestos should be properly insulated or removed before a painting job commences to prevent accidental exposure to asbestos. Only trained and licensed contractors should remove asbestos coatings, insulation boards or insulation.

Lifting: Paint pails, storage bins with drop cloths and other supplies all add up to heavy load!

- Use a trolley, if possible, for moving loads to and around

the work area
- For loads over 20kg – get some help from a co-worker.
- Avoid awkward postures and repetitive tasks, take a break or two.
- Keep the staging area clean, organized and clutter free.
- When lifting, bend your knees, not your back! Use the strong leg muscles than to have a sore back
- A stable posture is essential – put one foot slightly in front of the other for a good stance

Ladders: A ladder is one of the most important tools of a professional painter. A majority of the falls from ladders do not happen off extension ladders. They happen off the smaller step ladders. When you get too comfortable with step ladders, a fall is likely. When using step ladders, you are not supposed to use the top of the ladder or the last rung on the ladder to stand on.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR PAINTERS

- Check safety data sheet (SDS) of the paint or coating product for the selection and use of appropriate personal protective equipment and safe use of the product.
- Evaluate the work area for existing and potential hazards.
- Learn the correct procedures for working at heights.
- Select the correct ladder for the job. Use extended handle paintbrush and eliminate the use of ladders.
- Avoid awkward body positions and take breaks when needed.
- Learn safe lifting techniques.
- Know how to prevent injury from electrical hazards. Maintain safe distances from energized electrical equipment or utility lines.
- Keep tools and equipment, and their safety features, in good working order.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment and footwear.
- Keep work areas clear of clutter and equipment.
- Learn safety procedures for working in confined spaces.
- Maintain good ventilation during painting.
- Know how to prevent exposure to bird and rodent droppings.

MORE PREVENTIVE MEASURES – WEAR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Coveralls and shoe covers
- Goggles or safety glasses
- Gloves
- Respirators and masks
- Use the right ladder for the job.

FINAL WORD

Painters apply coatings and paint to interior and exterior building surfaces with a variety of jobsites, chemical use, and physical and ergonomic demands. Painting may seem like light work to others, but as a painter, you likely know there are many hazardous conditions you face consistently.