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**Federal Regulation Will Require Renovators to Work Safely with Lead Paint
Advocates Welcome Rule while Urging EPA to Fix Rule Flaws**

Washington, DC, (March 31, 2008) — The Alliance for Healthy Homes and the National Center for Healthy Housing praise the new EPA regulation as a step in the right direction in saving children, workers and occupants from exposure to unhealthy levels of lead during renovation, repair, and painting activities in homes and child-occupied buildings built before 1978. At the same time, they say the rule must be strengthened to adequately protect children.

The rule requires contractors who work in older homes and child-occupied facilities to take simple, low-cost precautions to avoid creating and spreading lead dust, and to clean up any dust that is generated. The rule also requires the firms or management companies that are disturbing lead paint to be certified and to have at least one employee who has completed a one-day lead-safe work practices training. Firms are responsible for providing “on-the-job” training for all other employees. Power sanding, open flame burning, and sandblasting of painted surfaces are prohibited by the rule.

Although recent attention has been focused on lead in toys, the vast majority of children with lead poisoning are exposed to lead from the old paint in their own home. Dust created by damaged paint is the primary route of exposure for children. EPA estimates that as many as 8 million renovations occur each year that could generate dangerous levels of lead dust – which even in miniscule amounts can harm children.

“Congress instructed the EPA to address the dangers of disturbing lead paint during renovations in 1992. In the 16 years since we’ve been waiting for this rule, at least 17 million children have been exposed to harmful levels of lead unnecessarily, permanently losing IQ points as a result. The new regulation is an important first step towards preventing another generation from being poisoned by debris left behind after a remodeling job,” stated Alliance for Healthy Homes Executive Director, Patrick MacRoy.

While a positive step, EPA's final rule ignores many scientific and practical concerns raised by leading experts and advocates. Significant flaws in the rule would expose children and pregnant women, as well as renovation workers and painters to dangerous levels of lead, provide tenants and property owners false assurances that lead dust has been safely removed and make enforcement of the rule unlikely.

The rule has no credible method for ensuring that lead dust generated in the course of the repair or renovation is adequately cleaned up and removed. Instead of requiring testing for lead dust through a proven method called "clearance testing" following renovation work, the rule requires contractors to run a cloth over the area a certain number of times, hoping to show it does not pick up visible dust. Since a small amount of invisible lead dust can poison a child, the effects of omitting clearance could be devastating.

"Over the last two decades, the federal government and private industry have invested millions of dollars validating the existing quantitative clearance test, which assures families that their homes are safe following renovation," stated National Center for Healthy Housing Executive Director, Rebecca Morley. "To replace the reliable quantitative test with the rule's qualitative test is very disappointing."

The traditional quantitative clearance test, along with work practice standards that minimize the generation of dust, has been a cornerstone of rehabilitation work conducted in federally assisted housing since 2000. With this rule, the EPA has adopted an unproven method that is less protective than the methods required by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for low-income housing.

Advocates and scientists encourage EPA to address additional shortcomings in the rule by:

- Banning the use of "dry scraping," which generates substantial amounts of hard-to-clean lead dust and increases lead exposure;
- Requiring formal lead-safe work practices training of all workers, not just their supervisors; and
- Strengthening its approach to rule enforcement and providing substantial incentives for states to adopt and enforce the rule.

The rule applies to most residential property constructed before 1978; the year lead-based paint was banned in the United States. Certain child-occupied facilities, including day cares, pre-schools and kindergarten classrooms, will also be subject to the rule. The rule's requirements, however, are waived if there is proof that there is no lead in the paint where the work is to be performed. The annual direct cost of the rule for small firms represents less than 1 percent of revenues.

Lead, a heavy metal once widely used in paints, gasoline, and other products, is known to be toxic in very small quantities. Although lead is bad for everyone, resulting in anemia, kidney damage and reproductive problems in adults, lead's impact on children is especially serious. A potent neurotoxin, lead damages children's developing brains, causing reduced intelligence and possible learning and behavioral problems.

The Alliance for Healthy Homes is the national, nonprofit public interest organization advocating for practical, affordable policy solutions and working to build community capacity to prevent housing-related hazards from harming the health of children, their families, and other residents. The Alliance stresses the importance of fixing housing-related health hazards before they cause harm; housing that is decent, environmentally safe, and affordable for all; and holistic strategies that efficiently address multiple hazards and their underlying causes. The Alliance provides strategic and technical support to community-based organizations and state and local agencies across the nation.

The National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) is the only national scientific and technical non-profit organization dedicated to creating healthy and safe homes for America's children through practical and proven steps. NCHH develops scientifically valid and practical strategies to make homes safe from hazards, to alert low- income families about housing-related health risks, and to help them protect their children. NCHH also works with governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop standards and programs and guide their implementation through insurers, lenders, federal and state laws and regulations, community organizations, and the courts.

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