

Downloadable Worksheet : Lead-Safe Renovation (Pre-1978 Homes)



Stop and call a certified pro if:

You're stripping multiple windows* • You need power tools that will disturb paint • Occupants include children under 6 or pregnant people • You can't maintain containment reliably

**Windows are explicitly called out as key dust-collection / lead-risk surfaces. EPA's cleaning verification and/or clearance language references window sills (and, in some contexts, window troughs) as dust collection surfaces where lead dust is checked/managed.*

If your home was built before 1978, assume lead paint may be present unless testing indicates otherwise.

If children under 6, pregnant people, or high-risk occupants are present—or if you can't reliably contain dust—pause and hire a qualified lead-safe professional.

Paid contractors working in pre-1978 homes/child-occupied facilities must follow EPA RRP requirements (certification, work practices, and pre-renovation education). DIY homeowners aren't necessarily covered by the rule, but EPA still recommends avoiding high-dust practices and using lead-safe methods.

Lead-Safe Renovation Checklist (Process / Workflow)

Step 1 — Decide if this job needs lead-safe controls

- ☐ Confirm building age: Pre-1978 = lead possible (inside or outside).
- ☐ Identify which painted/coated surfaces will be disturbed (paint, shellac, varnish, stain, coatings—even under wallpaper).
- ☐ Choose your approach:
- ☐ Test affected surfaces (certified inspector/risk assessor; or test kits/paint chips under certain circumstances), or
- ☐ Assume lead is present and follow lead-safe practices throughout.

(The EPA guide emphasizes that affected surfaces must be tested or presumed lead for covered work, and that lead-safe practices apply when lead is present/presumed.)

Step 2 — Set up containment (keep dust in, people/pets out)

Access control

- ☐ Post warning signs at the boundary (“Warning – Lead Work Area” and “Poison, No Smoking or Eating,” in occupants’ primary language).
- ☐ Keep unauthorized people and pets out using barriers (tape, rope, fencing, doorway barriers).

Containment size (minimums)

- ☐ Interior: protect floors/surfaces with plastic sheeting extending at least 6 feet from where paint will be disturbed (or farther if needed to catch all dust).
- ☐ Exterior: cover the ground with plastic/impermeable material extending at least 10 feet beyond the work perimeter (or farther if needed).
- ☐ If exterior work is within 10 feet of the property line, use vertical containment or equivalent extra precautions.

Interior setup essentials

- ☐ Remove furniture/rugs/window coverings OR fully wrap/seal them in plastic.
- ☐ Close windows/doors in the work area; cover doors in plastic (maintain a pass-through while confining dust).
- ☐ Cover/close HVAC ducts/openings in the work area with taped plastic.
- ☐ Establish a “clean exit” routine so tools/people don’t track dust out.

(These setup steps are pulled from the EPA “Set It Up Safely” section, including the 6’/10’ minimum plastic sheeting distances and the requirement to keep non-workers out.)

Step 3 — Protect yourself (PPE + hygiene)

- ☐ Wear appropriate protective gear (see shopping list): disposable coveralls, shoe covers, hat; respiratory protection when dust/chips are created.
- ☐ No eating/drinking/smoking in the work area.
- ☐ Wash hands/face at breaks and end of day.
- ☐ Bag/store disposable PPE; launder non-disposable work clothing separately from family laundry.

(The EPA guide highlights PPE, respiratory protection such as N-100 when dust/chips are created, and strict hygiene controls.)

Step 4 — Minimize dust (use safer methods + avoid prohibited practices)

Never do these high-dust / prohibited practices (contractors are prohibited; DIY should avoid them)

- ☐ No open-flame burning/torching.
- ☐ No high-speed paint removal methods (sanding/grinding/power planing/needle gun/abrasive blasting/sandblasting) unless properly

shrouded/contained and attached to HEPA collection at the point of generation.

- ☐ No heat gun use above 1,100°F.

Dust-control methods to use instead

- ☐ Mist surfaces before sanding/scraping/drilling/cutting (avoid misting within 1 foot of live electrical outlets).
- ☐ Score paint at seams before separating components.
- ☐ Pry/pull components apart instead of hammering/breaking them.
- ☐ Use power tools only with HEPA vacuum attachments (when applicable).
- ☐ Keep debris/components in the contained area until wrapped/bagged.

(These are summarized directly from the EPA “Minimize the Dust” section and the Renovate Right “During the Work” section.)

Step 5 — Clean as you go (daily) + final cleanup (end of job)

Daily

- ☐ Bag trash as you go (heavy-duty bags).
- ☐ HEPA vacuum the work area frequently; clean tools.
- ☐ Dispose of/clean PPE; remind residents to stay out.

Final cleanup (don’t remove containment too soon)

- ☐ Collect paint chips/debris and seal in heavy-duty bags.
- ☐ Mist plastic sheeting before folding (dirty side inward), then tape shut or bag.

For interior work: clean from higher to lower:

- ☐ Walls (HEPA vacuum or damp wipe)
- ☐ Remaining surfaces + objects (HEPA vacuum; beater bar for carpets/rugs where applicable)
- ☐ Wet wipe surfaces; wet mop uncarpeted floors thoroughly

(This follows the EPA “Leave the Work Area Clean” section.)

Step 6 — Control and dispose of waste (including wastewater)

- ☐ Bag/seal waste before it leaves the work area; consider double-bagging to prevent tears.
- ☐ Wrap large components in plastic sheeting and seal with tape.
- ☐ Store waste securely at end of each day and at job end (prevent access/release).
- ☐ Transport waste in a contained way (prevent dust/debris release).

Wastewater

- ☐ Filter cleanup water and dispose appropriately (EPA notes dumping in a toilet may be allowed by local rules; otherwise collect and manage per local requirements).
- ☐ Never dump wastewater down a storm drain or onto the ground.

(Summarized from the EPA “Control the Waste” section.)

Step 7 — Verify it's safe to reoccupy (visual + cleaning verification / clearance)

- ☐ Perform a visual inspection: no dust, debris, or residue remains.
- ☐ For interior spaces, EPA describes a cleaning verification method using wet disposable cloths on dust-collection surfaces (window sills, countertops, floors) compared to a verification card.
- ☐ Optional/required in some situations: dust clearance testing by qualified lead professionals (often required in federally assisted housing; may also be required by state/local rules or requested by the homeowner).

(This is pulled from EPA Step 7: cleaning verification / clearance.)

Extra (if you're hiring someone):

Pre-renovation education paperwork

- ☐ If work is performed for compensation in pre-1978 housing/child-occupied facilities, provide the EPA “Renovate Right” lead pamphlet before work starts and retain records (EPA notes retaining records for three years).
- ☐ Obtain proof of receipt or certificate of mailing where required.

(Summarized from EPA pre-renovation education requirements and the Renovate Right pamphlet.)

DIY Shopping List *(What to Have Before You Start)*

A) Containment + access control (the “keep it in / keep them out” kit)

Warning signs (“Lead Work Area / No Smoking or Eating”)

Barrier tape, rope, or temporary fencing; cones

Heavy-duty plastic sheeting

Tape: masking / painter’s / duct (you’ll use more than you think)

Stapler (and staples)

Utility knife or scissors

Rigid framing material (if you need vertical containment)

B) Personal protective equipment (PPE) + hygiene

Disposable coveralls

Disposable shoe covers

Painter’s hat (or disposable head covering)

Respiratory protection appropriate for dust/chips (EPA mentions N-100 disposable respirator in its PPE list)

Heavy-duty bags for used PPE + a designated “dirty” bag/container

Handwashing supplies available nearby (soap, towels)

C) Dust-minimizing tools + consumables

Misting bottle or pump sprayer

Wet/dry sandpaper or sanding sponge

Heavy plastic sheeting (extra for wrapping debris/components)

Tack pads / disposable wipes / paper towels

Heavy-duty plastic bags for debris

HEPA vacuum (and attachments); for some cleanup, EPA notes a powered beater bar for

carpets/rugs

Optional / as-needed (choose carefully; avoid high-dust methods)

Low-temperature heat gun (keep below 1,100°F when used)

Chemical strippers without methylene chloride

Power tools only if paired with HEPA-filtered vacuum attachments/shrouds

D) Cleaning kit (daily + final cleanup)

General-purpose cleaner

Disposable wet-cleaning wipes or towels

Mop + disposable mop heads

Two buckets (or a two-sided bucket with wringer)

Electrostatically charged dry cleaning cloths (used in parts of EPA’s verification flow)

Shovel/rake (for exterior debris)

Wet mopping system (especially useful for large floor areas)

E) Waste handling + disposal prep

Lots of duct tape (for sealing bags)

Extra heavy-duty bags (double-bagging helps prevent tears)

Filter method for cleanup water (plus a plan for lawful disposal)

A secure staging area for bagged waste (out of reach of kids/pets)