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Stimulus Proposal Allocates Lead and Healthy Homes Funds

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (known as the "stimulus" bill) was passed by the House on Jan. 28. A similar proposal is currently under consideration in the Senate in the form of an amendment to the House's proposal (S.Amdt.98). Both versions would significantly increase funding related to healthy housing directly and indirectly. The stimulus would add an additional \$100 million for HUD's lead grant programs and significantly increase funding for energy efficiency retrofits in project-based HUD-assisted housing, the Community Development Block Grant Program, the HOME Investment Partnerships block grant program, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, public housing capital funds, and other housing programs that would expand the supply of decent and affordable housing. The Alliance, along with the National Center for Healthy Housing and the Children's Health Forum had offered a stimulus bill proposal to the Obama transition team to fund both lead and healthy homes treatments.

The House version gives wide discretion to HUD for determining the allocation of the \$100 million for lead, with the exception that \$30 million is to be spent "on a competitive basis for areas with the highest lead paint abatement needs." The Senate version specifically instructs HUD to first focus the dollars on lead hazard control grants that were deemed eligible (scored at least 75 points) but were not funded in 2008 as a mechanism to help ensure money flows out of HUD quickly. Any remaining funds would then be added to HUD's appropriations for 2009 lead hazard control grants. Both the House and Senate versions also contain a section allowing part of the \$6 billion allocated to school facilities to be used for lead abatement and other indoor environment improvements at public schools. Additional sections of the bills increase weatherization and green building funds, which may also have some healthy homes impacts.

As the Alert goes to press, bipartisan group of Senators who are reluctant to support the now nearly \$900 billion bill are reportedly bargaining for cuts among provisions that would not boost the economy in the short term. Republican leaders in the House specifically mentioned the \$100 million for reducing lead hazards as an example of "wasteful" appropriations in the bill. Advocates are encouraged to contact their representatives to voice support for the inclusion of the lead abatement money in the stimulus bill. The Alliance, National Center for Healthy Housing and the Children's Health Forum have signed a statement urging lawmakers to **keep lead paint funding in the stimulus**.

To check on the changing status of the proposals in the coming days, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and search for HR.1 or S.Amdt.98.

Lead in DC's Water: New Study Shows Children's Blood Lead Level Increased 2001-2004

A peer-reviewed study published in *Environmental Science and Technology* on Jan. 26 by researchers from Virginia Tech and the Children's National Medical Center concludes that thousands of young District of Columbia children had elevations in their blood lead levels during a 2 ½ year period between 2001 and 2004 when water lead levels in the City were staggeringly high. The study's conclusions contradict earlier statements and studies from paid consultants of the DC Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the DC Department of Health that showed no changes in BLLs ≥ 10 and only small increases of children with BLLs ≥ 5 . The earlier papers have been widely cited by DC WASA and numerous government agencies as evidence that the increased lead levels in DC tap water were relatively inconsequential.

The new study correlates DC WASA water lead level monitoring data from 2000 through 2007 with more than 28,000 blood lead tests for DC children performed at Children's National Medical Center between 1999 and 2007. The blood lead tests were analyzed by zip code and focused on children 1.3 years of age or younger, a group considered at greatest risk of lead exposure from consuming infant formula made from tap water. Compared with blood lead data from 2000, the percentage of youngest children with elevated blood lead levels (≥ 10) increased in 2003 at the peak of the water lead crisis by a factor of 2.4 in four zip codes with the greatest proportion of lead service lines. The percentage of young children with elevated blood lead levels also increased slightly in the zip codes with an intermediate concentration of lead service lines and actually decreased in the zip codes with the fewest lead lines – just as blood lead levels nationally decreased during the same period.

The new study and the reactions of officials to it have been extensively covered in the Washington Post and it will be the subject of a DC City Council public hearing on Feb. 10. Advocates also hope the study renews official interest in ensuring that DC's water is safe today, strengthening oversight of DC WASA, and fixing shortcomings in federal water safety regulations. A detailed [summary of the study](#) is available. Links to press coverage and other information are available at www.dccwasawatch.blogspot.com.

EPA Receives Support for CARB-Like Formaldehyde Regulation; Adds Hearing in New Orleans & Extends Comment Period

As announced in the December *Alliance Alert*, in response to a petition from the Sierra Club signed by dozens of organizations including the Alliance, the EPA has started rule making to address the hazards of formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has already established a standard that greatly lowers formaldehyde emissions for products sold in California.

Although the dangers of formaldehyde, a respiratory irritant and potential carcinogen, became household knowledge as a result of the "toxic trailers" given by FEMA to hundreds of thousands of evacuees following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the hazards are more widespread. Composite wood products, widely used in construction and in the manufacture of furniture and other household goods, may release formaldehyde vapors from the glues or resins that hold the wood pieces or chips together.

The Alliance, Sierra Club, and National Center for Healthy Housing are encouraging the EPA to adopt California's stringent standard. Hammered out over a seven-year period, the CARB standard is acknowledged by both health advocates and the industry as being one of the toughest formaldehyde standards in the world. To help ensure meaningful compliance, the standard also created a rigorous third-party testing and certification process. Most domestic manufacturers of composite wood products are well aware of the California standards and are already in or nearly in compliance with its requirements.

Indeed, at the public hearings to date, the EPA has heard from a wide range of domestic manufacturers who support federalizing the CARB standard. In addition to addressing health concerns and reassuring their customers

of the products' safety, the regulation could provide an advantage to domestic manufacturers who are ready to comply over foreign imports. This, in turn, has resulted in support for the regulation from organized labor.

Responding to public pressure to ensure input from the Gulf Coast communities most burdened by the "toxic trailers," the EPA announced the addition of a hearing in New Orleans on March 4th. Additionally, EPA extended the time for public comment until March 15th.

The [Alliance's testimony](#) is available on our website, and comments can be submitted to regulations.gov using docket number EPA-HQ-OPPT-2008-0627.

Consumer Product Safety Commission Delays Parts of New Child Product Safety Rule

On Jan. 30, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) voted for a one year stay of enforcement for certain lead and phthalates testing and certification requirements of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act that apply to manufacturers and importers of products intended for children 12 years old and younger. Child product makers will still have to meet strict new limits on lead and phthalates, but CPSC will delay for a year a requirement for companies to test their products to verify compliance. The stay applies to testing and certification requirements for children's products that were scheduled to go into effect on February 10, 2009, that limit total lead content to 600 ppm (to be lowered to 100 ppm in steps by August 2011) and limit phthalate content for certain products to 1000 ppm. Painted objects, cribs, pacifiers, and jewelry were not included in the stay and still must comply and have third party certification. All other children's products are prohibited from having more than 600 ppm of lead and 1000 ppm of phthalates, but are not subject to the testing requirements.

On Jan. 28 the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and a coalition of business trade groups formally asked for a delay of the Feb. 10 effective date for the new lead content limit in children's products, but at press time CPSC had not ruled on this request. Meanwhile, the Coalition for Safe and Affordable Childrenswear joined with NAM this month to launch an advertising campaign asking Congress to extend the Feb. 10 deadline for the product safety regulations as additional six months, calling the rules "job-killing" and "impossible to meet."

CPSC is also considering exemptions for components or materials such as untreated wood or inaccessible parts. In recent weeks, a series of affected groups have come forward to ask for exemptions or clarification about requirements, including resale shops and jewelry sellers.

Some business groups were unhappy with CPSC's delay because many major retailers are already requiring suppliers to test their products to show they meet the new lead and phthalate standards. Child health advocates expressed frustration with the length of the delay for enforcement of testing requirements. CPSC's press release announcing the delay is available at www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml09/09115.html.



HUD Cancels Some Lead NOFAs; Breaks-up SuperNOFA



The Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control at HUD has decided not to issue NOFAs for the Operation Lead Elimination Action Program (LEAP), Lead Outreach Program, or Lead Technical Studies Program in 2009. The LEAP program allowed non-profit and private sector entities to leverage outside funding with HUD dollars to conduct lead hazard control activities, the outreach program funded community training and awareness activities, and the lead technical study program funded research into the source and control of lead hazards. HUD issued no public statement regarding this change, but simply published a list of NOFA releases that excluded these programs. The Alliance confirmed that this did indeed mean these three programs would not be offered in 2009. The money traditionally allocated to these NOFAs will be included in the other OHHLHC NOFAs. The LEAP, Outreach, and LTS programs were all funding opportunities accessible to non-profit entities, rather than only units of government like the lead control/demonstration grants.

In a positive change, HUD also announced that NOFAs would be released program by program in 2009, rather than as a single “SuperNOFA.” This will help ensure timely release of NOFAs, especially those from OHHLHC. HUD anticipates releasing the Healthy Homes Technical Studies and Lead Control/Demonstration NOFAs by the end of February and the Healthy Homes Demonstration NOFA by the end of April. Although due dates have not been announced, it is likely they will adjust in accordance with the release dates of the NOFAs.

A new funding opportunity, “Green and Healthy Housing Technical Studies,” was also listed for 2009, with a NOFA scheduled to be released by the end of April. No further details of this new program were released by HUD.

Mandatory Blood Lead Testing Starting In Connecticut

Mandatory universal blood lead testing began in Connecticut in early January. The new legislation, requires all primary care providers to perform annual blood lead testing of all children less than three years of age and any child between the ages of 36 and 72 months who has not been previously screened.

Under the new law, local health departments will conduct epidemiological investigations and lead inspections to identify sources of lead exposure for children with blood lead levels that are greater than or equal to 15 micrograms per deciliter. The local director of health will order abatement or remediation of any sources of lead exposure that are identified and will use State funding to support these additional activities.

While universal blood lead testing has positive impacts on the fight against lead poisoning, the Alliance urges states to recognize the goal must be prevention, rather than waiting to treat disease after it develops. Prevention requires viewing the home as the vector of disease and taking safeguards to identify and control lead-pasted paint hazards before children are poisoned.

Rhode Island Holds Summit on Carbon Monoxide

Last November fire departments, state and local housing and building officials, healthy housing advocates and area Emergency Departments met under the guidance of the RI Department of Health, RICOSH, the RI Fire Marshal, the DOA Energy Office, and the RI Medical Society to collaborate on a Carbon Monoxide Task Force to help formalize how to best address the challenges that CO presents.

One outcome of the summit was a document outlining the prevalence of carbon monoxide poisoning in Rhode

Island, as well as a Healthy Housing Agenda, outlining effective ways to reduce exposure to carbon monoxide, including:

- * *Operating* CO Detectors properly located.
- * Proper installation, maintenance, functioning and inspection of heating system. {Furnaces, chimneys or flues, vent pipes, back drafting (changes in air pressure), undamaged furnace exchangers.}
- * Exterior venting for stoves, grills, dryers and space heaters.
- * Sealed combustion or direct-vented appliances.
- * Prohibit motor vehicle idling in and near housing air intakes/plenums.

For more information on the Rhode Island Carbon Monoxide Task Force, contact [RICOSH](#).

EPA's Aging Initiative has a new publication on carbon monoxide poisoning aimed at older adults, available online or for ordering multiple copies. <http://www.epa.gov/aging/resources/factsheets/pcmp/index.htm>.

Continuing Push for International Ban of Lead-Based Paint

An international group of advocates is continuing efforts to create a world-wide agreement limiting the use of lead-based paint. Spurred by recent studies demonstrating the wide spread prevalence of lead in new paint in Nigeria, China, and India, Occupational Knowledge International launched an effort to encourage the United States to become a sponsor of a lead-based paint regulation at the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management meeting this May in Geneva. Advocates are encouraged to [write to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton](#) to help encourage US involvement.

Research Briefs

Housing Improvements Benefit Health

In January the National Center for Healthy Housing released an assessment of Healthy Homes Interventions showing the ways in which housing Improvements Benefit Health.

NCHH convened more than 30 of the nation's leading housing and health experts to document housing and neighborhood improvements (interventions) that are scientifically proven to improve health and safety. The experts reviewed more than 170 scientific studies of housing interventions that improve asthma and respiratory problems, cancer, injuries, and other health concerns. The study highlights a few interventions ready now for broad-scale implementation, including:

- * Lead hazard control to prevent lead poisoning
- * Integrated pest management (IPM) to reduce asthma and pesticide exposure
- * Comprehensive and tailored home-based asthma interventions
- * Active sub-slab depressurization to reduce lung-cancer from radon gas
- * Smoke alarm installations to prevent injuries and death from residential fires

To view the full report, please visit: www.nchh.org/Housing_Interventions_and_Health.pdf.

Effects of Pesticide Exposure on Pregnancy

An article in the December 2008 issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine concludes that women with potential exposure to pesticides at work or at home took longer to get pregnant than women without pesticide exposure. Pregnant women from a migrant farmworker community who worked in agriculture, lived within 200 feet of agriculture fields or used pesticides in their home took significantly longer to conceive.

than those who did not have these pesticide exposures. Past studies found a relationship between pesticides and male fertility, including effects on sperm health and longer time to pregnancy, but few studies explored how pesticide exposure affects women's ability to get pregnant. The article abstract is available at www.joem.org/pt/re/joem/abstract.00043764-200812000-00003.htm.

New Screening Tools to Estimate Home Mold Burdens

An article in the Jan. 2009 issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine describes the development of screening tools to estimate the mold burden in a home to determine whether more detailed testing might be useful. The article abstract is available at www.joem.org/pt/re/joem/abstract.00043764-200901000-00011.htm.

Additional Evidence of Lead Dust Emissions from Demolition

A study of lead dust emissions from demolition activities in Chicago published in the February issue of Environmental Research showed potential for substantial lead contamination. Nearly five times as much lead was deposited in areas surrounding active demolition than the background level in residential areas. Although not statistically significant, there is some evidence that using water spraying reduced the lead dust emissions. Additional research is underway to better quantify the problem. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2008.10.010>.

ALLIANCE NEWS

The Alliance is on the road with a mission to help create more training providers for EPA's Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) Rule! With a Prius packed to the brim containing training materials and hands-on demonstration supplies, Patrick MacRoy and Ralph Scott drove up to Trenton, New Jersey in late January to conduct the Alliance's first course offering of RRP "Train-the-Trainer", proving it a great success. The Alliance created this course to help organizations become accredited trainers under EPA's new RRP rule that goes into effect April 2010. The next class is scheduled for February 16-17th in Atlanta, GA (in partnership with the NeighborWorks Training Institute). Followed up by Raleigh, NC (Feb 26-27), Denver, CO (March 11-12), Richmond VA (March 23-24), Orlando, FL (April 27-28), and Phoenix, AZ (May 4-5). Due to high demand, the Denver training has been sold out. Visit the Alliance's website for updates on the [dates and locations for these classes](#). To register for a class, or for more information, contact Patrick MacRoy at pmacroy@afhh.org.

If you appreciate the news and information in the Alliance Alert, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Alliance! We rely on donations from individuals and organizations to allow us to do policy work in Washington and across the country. You can make a one-time donation or sign up to make a recurring monthly or quarterly donation on our [website](#). Thank you for your support!

Sign up to receive updates from the Alliance! To receive the Alliance Alert in your inbox and to subscribe to our no-cost listservs (Leadnet and Healthyhomesnet), visit www.afhh.org/forms/alert_subscribe.asp.

Upcoming Events

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) School of Public Health will be hosting its First Annual Minority Health in the Midwest Conference, “Minority Health in a Global Community: Midwestern Perspectives on Health, Poverty, and the Environment” February 27, 2009. This conference will highlight the work of emerging scholars and researchers. Topics should reflect minority health in the Midwest. Registration is free. Conference and registration info is available at: www.publichealthlearning.com/Public/Announcements/default.aspx#announcement203

A national conference on “Approaches to Managing Mold in Buildings” will be held April 27-29, 2009, in Orlando, FL. Sponsored by the University of Tulsa, the conference will cover the “latest research and applied outcomes to use in field practice from key national and international experts.” For more information, visit www.utulsa.edu/iaqprogram or call 918-631-3088.

The 2009 National Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Conference will occur April 28-May 1, 2009, in Orlando, FL. The conference will provide a wealth of information and a series of panel discussions from healthy homes professionals and advocates. For more information, see www.LeadMoldConferences.com.

Save the date for the symposium entitled “Promoting Environmental and Policy Change to Support Healthy Aging,” to be held Sept. 15-16, 2009, in Chapel Hill, NC. This symposium is a third in a series funded by CDC’s Healthy Aging Program. More information on this symposium can be found at www.prc-han.org.

Save the Date for the 2009 National Environmental Public Health Conference: Healthy People in a Healthy Environment, October 26-28, 2009, Sheraton Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, GA.