



For Immediate Release:

January 8, 2014

Lead Paint Declared a Public Nuisance by Superior Court

LA County receives \$632.5 million in judgment to remove lead paint from homes

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health applauds the California Superior Court ruling of holding three paint companies liable for public health hazards resulting from the sale and use of lead paint. Santa Clara Superior Court Judge James P. Kleinberg issued his final verdict ordering Sherwin Williams, National Lead and ConAgra to pay \$1.15 billion into a fund to remove lead paint from homes in various counties and cities in California. The County of Los Angeles' share of this fund is 55% or \$632.5 million. Los Angeles County is currently reviewing Judge Kleinberg's decision and is working on a plan to implement the court's order for lead-paint abatement and remediation.

“This decision is an overdue payment that will help safeguard the health of our children and protect their future,” said Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, Los Angeles County Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Children exposed to lead suffer from neurologic impairments that can affect a child's learning ability and their future earning potential and productivity.”

Lead-based paint was banned in 1978 but still remains in over 1.5 million homes in Los Angeles County. The judgment will provide funding for remediation of lead-paint contaminated housing, with priority given to residential properties with current or a past history of lead poisoned children, and properties in low income areas. In addition to the homes where children have been poisoned, the County plans to target over 85,000 homes that are in low income neighborhoods.

The main cause of lead poisoning in Los Angeles County children is exposure to lead-based paint. Although tremendous strides have been made over the years to reduce lead exposure, thousands of children are still being harmed by lead in Los Angeles County. From 2007-2011 there were over 40,000 reported lead poisonings (age <21) with blood lead levels greater than or equal to 5 mcg/dL, and 438 of these children were treated for very high blood lead levels.

“California Superior Court Judge Kleinberg's decision is clear. Companies that knowingly manufactured and sold lead paint for interior use in residences despite knowing that it poisoned children, must be held accountable for their actions,” said, Dr. Fielding.

The California Superior Court decision is the largest public nuisance award in the history of the State and comes after 13 years of vigorous litigation. The case has already gone up to the Court of Appeal twice and the California Supreme Court once.

“If you have young children and are concerned that your home may have lead-based paint or other sources of lead exposure, get the facts,” Dr. Fielding said. “Public Health can provide information on sources of lead poisoning and, if necessary, referrals to certified lead inspectors through the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Hotline at 1-800-LA-4-LEAD.”



Public Health News

Parents who are concerned about their children's exposure to lead are urged to ask their child's doctor about lead testing. Parents who do not have a doctor for their child can also call the hotline for referrals to free and low-cost health services for children and teens.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

###