

Highlights of the NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation of Exposure to Lead during Work on and Near Lead-Sheathed Telecommunication Cables

Key Findings

One personal air sample for lead was above the OSHA action level

- The remaining air samples were below the OSHA action level of 30 micrograms per cubic meter.

All sampled employees had lead on hands even after routine hand hygiene was performed

- Routine field hand hygiene before leaving the worksite or eating consisted of using wet wipes.

Lead was found on surfaces in vehicles, on equipment and tools, and in some common areas in the garages

- Lead found on surfaces may contribute to lead exposure through accidental ingestion during hand-to-mouth activities and increase the potential for take-home lead exposure.

Some employees had blood lead levels (BLLs) above health-based reference levels recommended by public health agencies

Key Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Reduce employees' exposure to lead in air

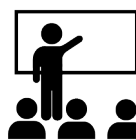
Some specific actions we recommend include:



Follow the OSHA lead standard requirements after an air sampling result above the action level.



When possible, identify if work assignments in manholes and other environments employees will enter have or previously had lead-sheathed cable.



Continue requiring and providing training on work practices to prevent exposure to lead in air.



Train workers to recognize when PPE for working on or near lead-sheathed cable is required.

Recommendation 2: Reduce employees' exposure to lead on hands and surfaces

Some specific types of training we recommend include:



Continue implementing the replacement of wet wipes with lead removal wipes at field sites.



Provide workers with lead removal soap at garages.



Conduct thorough cleanings of vehicles, tools, and other surfaces that may have lead using lead removal wipes.



Train workers to reduce the potential for take-home lead exposure.

Recommendation 3: Reduce employees' exposure to lead through improved medical surveillance

Some specific actions we recommend include:



For new workers, conduct initial BLL testing before any work that may expose them to lead.



Conduct annual voluntary BLL testing for current employees and intermittent testing after suspected lead exposure events.

Read all of our findings and recommendations in the full report.

Ask your employer for a copy or go to <https://www2a.cdc.gov/hhe/search.asp> and search for [2024-0046-3413].

