

NEWS

you can use



Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ♦ MC-113 ♦ PO Box 13087 ♦ Austin TX 78711-3087

JUNE 2005

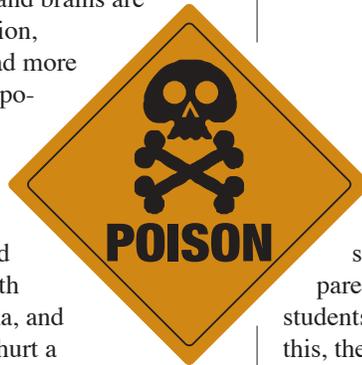
Protecting Children from Lead Poisoning

Childhood lead poisoning is a major, preventable environmental health problem. Children are more susceptible to harm than adults because their bodies and brains are still developing and maturing. In addition, children's bodies are able to absorb lead more readily than adults. Even low-level exposure can have an effect on children's learning and behavior. Lead exposure and the potential for adverse health effects are evaluated by measuring the levels of lead in blood. Very high blood lead levels can cause more severe health consequences, including seizures, coma, and death. Exposure to too much lead can hurt a child's brain and nervous system, blood, kidneys, digestive system, and reproductive system. Symptoms in children include headaches, memory problems, nervousness, poor hearing, irritability, reduced hand-eye coordination, learning problems, anemia, stomach pain, poor appetite, nausea, and weight loss.

Primary sources of lead exposure for children are from deteriorating lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust, and lead-contaminated residential soil. Many Texas homes built before 1978 were painted with lead-based paint. Chipping paint or remodeling a house covered in lead paint can create dust and flakes which can be unintentionally ingested or inhaled, potentially causing lead poisoning. Children are often exposed to lead by dust that settles on floors, toys, bare soil, and other surfaces where it can easily get on children's hands and then into their mouths. Food stored in some glazed pottery and ceramicware or stored in lead-soldered cans can absorb lead contaminants.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce the risk of lead poisoning, especially in children. Wash children's hands and faces often, before they eat, and after they have played in the dirt. Wash toys and pacifiers on a regular basis. Keep children from chewing window sills or other painted surfaces. You can clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead from soil.

For more information on lead poisoning and how to reduce the risk, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection



agency at www.epa.gov/lead/. To order a copy of the TCEQ's publication, *Lead Poisoning (GI-069)* email: educate@tceq.state.tx.us, or to view before ordering, visit www.tceq.state.tx.us/comm_exec/forms_pubs/pubs/gi/gi-069.html.

Poisons Come In all Sizes and Colors

Changes in our society have had a dramatic effect on the potential for accidental poisonings of children in the home. As trends increase toward single-parent families and families in which both parents work outside of the home, many elementary-aged students are being left in charge of younger siblings. Add to this, the increasing use of potentially harmful products in the home, from cleaning supplies and medicines to exotic plants, and the result is a dangerous situation for home safety.

The accidental poison rate for children in the United States now stands at one poisoning every thirty seconds. That's more than 2,880 children poisoned accidentally every day, or one in every six children.

Prevention is the key to addressing this tremendous problem. Elementary school-aged children hold a special place in poison prevention. Their level of responsibility in the home, combined with their desire to be more independent and helpful, make them a part of the solution to accidental poisoning rather than a part of the problem. Educating these elementary-aged children provides an opportunity to instill an awareness of the problem, anticipation of potential poisonings, knowledge of prevention measures, and steps to take in the case of a poisoning emergency. The Texas Poison Center Network (TPCN) has produced an activity and coloring book called *Poison Prevention* that teaches children about poison prevention in and around the home. To view the activity book, visit www.poisoncontrol.org/ActivityBkjungle.pdf.

Written in simple and easy-to-understand language, the coloring book *Mikey Learns About Poison Safety*, depicts Mikey being shown dangers around the home and how to recognize possible poisons. To view the coloring book, visit www.poisoncontrol.org/coloringbook.pdf.



An environmental message brought to you by the Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division.

Kids Come In All Sizes and Colors! So Do Poisons! is a brochure from the TPCN. It comes in English or Spanish translation. Contents include an introduction to the Texas Poison Center Network, rules for preventing accidental poisonings in the home, a checklist for poison-proofing the home, a guide for identifying poisonous plants, and information on how to handle an emergency poisoning situation. To order a copy of the brochure, go to www.poisoncontrol.org/fem.htm.

Pollution Prevention Workshop Slated for Hospital Professionals

Healthcare facilities throughout Texas are joining in the fight to prevent pollution and make a positive impact on the environment. *Hospitals for a Healthy Environment* (H2E) is a performance-based program that helps partners assess their current environmental programs, set annual goals, and develop action plans to make environmental improvements. H2E partners commit to four primary goals: 1) work toward the elimination of mercury from the waste stream, 2) reduce waste generated by the facility, 3) minimize the use of persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic chemicals, 4) implement programs and policies to protect the environment, improve worker safety, reduce pollution, and advance community health. Currently, there are 71 partner hospitals in Texas that have made the commitment to improving the environment and the TCEQ is also committed to assisting H2E partners in their efforts.

The TCEQ is partnering with the Texas Healthcare Facilities Managers Association and Houston's M.D. Anderson Cancer Center to host a Pollution Prevention Workshop on September 1 that will offer H2E partners and other hospital professionals sessions on environmentally responsible hospital management. Attendees will learn about environmentally preferable purchasing, environmental management systems, green building techniques, waste compliance, mercury elimination, and much more. If your healthcare facility is interested in registering for this unique and informative event, please contact Kelly Coleman, H2E Coordinator, at 512/239-5171 for more information.

The TCEQ Gives Eligible Sites Priority Status on Permit Applications

Great news for CLEAN TEXAS CLEANER WORLD leaders! The TCEQ will give priority handling to permit applications that have been submitted by sites that have a TCEQ-approved Environmental Management System (EMS) and have a compliance history ranking of "high" at the time of application. This includes CLEAN TEXAS CLEANER WORLD Lone Star and National Leaders. Eligible entities that receive expedited permitting status must already have permits and can only be seeking permit modifications or permit renewals.

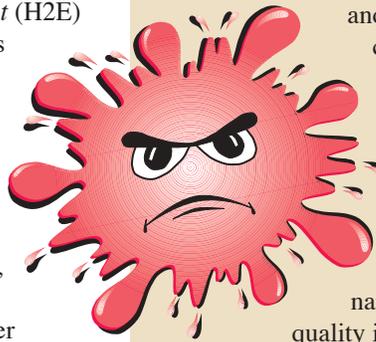
TCEQ's Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division and the Office of Permitting, Remediation & Registration signed on May 23 the Memorandum of Agreement that authorized this priority status of permit applications. For more information on the expedited permitting incentive, contact Mary Talukder, TCEQ EMS Sr. Technical Specialist, at mtalukde@tceq.state.tx.us.

Throwing Food Scraps, Grease, Fats, and Oils Down the Drain Can Be Costly

Are you in the habit of washing oil, grease, and food wastes down your drain? If so, you might want to keep your plumber's emergency telephone number handy. Oil and grease cause buildups that can block home and city sewer lines. Blocked sewer lines can cause sewage to run into our streets, creeks, parks, and cause backups into our homes and buildings. Exposure to untreated sewage can spread disease.

You can avoid expensive sewer backups, plumbing emergencies, and rate increases to cover sewer maintenance and repairs, and help protect water quality in your community. Here are some simple tips to help keep your pipes cleaner:

- Start a compost pile at home for non-meat food scraps.
- Scrape food scraps you can't compost into the trash, not the sink.
- Wipe pots, pans, and dishes with dry paper towels before rinsing or washing them. Then throw away the paper towels. Avoid using cloth towels, since the grease will go down the drain when you wash them.
- Place a catch basket or screen over the sink drain when rinsing dishware or when peeling or trimming food to capture small scraps that otherwise would be washed down the drain. Throw the scraps in the trash.
- Avoid using a garbage disposal. Putting any food down the drain may contribute to clogs.
- Place pan drippings, bacon grease, salad dressings, or other foods in a sealable, non-leaking container, then place in the trash.
- Properly dispose of or recycle used cooking oil. To dispose of small amounts, place the used cooking oil in a sealable container and place it in the trash. To recycle large amounts, like from a catfish fry or frying a turkey, contact a local recycler by looking in the yellow pages under "greases" or "rendering." Your community's household hazardous waste collection program may accept used cooking oil.
- Check out www.TexasFog.org for more information on this subject and how to obtain a free *Let's Tackle the Grease in This Kitchen!* video and poster.



TCEQ Plans Texas Country Cleanups for Rural Areas

The TCEQ is offering free, one-day collections for rural Texans to drop off their used motor oil, used oil filters, lead acid batteries, and rinsed plastic pesticide containers. Texas Country Cleanups scheduled for July are:

City	Date
Johnson City	7/19/2005
Kerrville	7/20/2005
Uvalde	7/21/2005

For more information on proper disposal and the locations of drop-sites, visit our Web site at www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec/opp/txcntry/tx_cntry.html.

Want to Launch a Community YardWise Program?

Come learn how to coordinate a program for your community and teach residents how to become YardWise—a simple four-step program that helps residents maintain a healthy yard with less cost, less work, and less waste! Mark your calendar for the following YardWise Coordinator training events:

July 14 and 15 - Marshall
July 26 and 27 - Amarillo
August 2 and 3 - El Paso

During two days of training, participants will receive the “Rodale Book of Composting, Requiem for a Lawnmower” by Sally Wasowski, the YardWise program manual, outreach handouts, and program planning and tips from experts in the field. The \$15 cost covers both days! For more information and how to register, contact Karen Overgaard at kareno@houston.rr.com, or Alan Watts, TCEQ, at awatts@tceq.state.tx.us.

Last Chance to Order Overstocked Poster!



When You Care for Your Car You Care for the Air (GI-259) is a poster that explains how cars and trucks contribute to air pollution and what drivers can do to help (in English and Spanish). We are overstocked on posters printed with our previous agency name, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. The information on the poster is otherwise accurate, so now's your chance to stock up on this informative piece! There are a limited number of these, so order early. To order the free poster to use in your community or organization, please send your request to educate@tceq.state.tx.us or call 512/239-0028. To view the poster before ordering, visit www.tceq.state.tx.us/comm_exec/forms_pubs/pubs/gi/gi-259.html.

Environmental News You Can Use is brought to you by the Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. To subscribe, send your name, mailing address, and e-mail address to educate@tceq.state.tx.us or call 512/239-3150.