

Environmental and social responsibility for the 21st Century

Protecting worker health

Proactive and responsible

It has been recognised for years that the handling and use of lead and lead containing products can have adverse health impacts if exposures leading to ingestion and inhalation of lead are not adequately controlled.

However, its unique properties, its relative inexpensiveness and its recyclable qualities make it very important to our modern way of life, so the lead industry is still thriving because of demand for modern, recyclable products.

Extensive measures are always taken to minimise worker exposure in industries handling lead. Air lead levels are controlled using enclosed systems and air extraction. Respirators, strict personal hygiene, showering facilities and special work clothes offer further protection to workers.

The most important factor however, is regular medical monitoring. Everyone in the industry for whom exposure is possible is frequently checked for the level of the metal in their blood.

Blood lead level is the best way to assess the degree of exposure of a worker and provides time for proactive measures to be undertaken to minimise future increases.

Governments normally set minimum limits at which workers have to be removed from exposure and kept away until their lead levels have fallen to within the acceptable range. For largely historic reasons there is some variation in these limits around the world. Industry's own voluntary lead risk assessment identifies 40 micrograms of lead per decilitre of blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$) as a safe level for the future. The risk assessment demonstrates that these levels, and indeed much lower levels, can and are being achieved through appropriate workplace management.

