



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
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Michael F. Easley, Governor

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May 16, 2003

To: Ed Norman, Supervisor  
NC Children's Environmental Health Branch

From: Pat Curran, Manager   
NC Health Hazards Control Unit (HHCU)

Subject: Clarification with Vacuum Cleaners to Collect Lead Dust

I understand that the topic of using different types of vacuum cleaners for removing lead dust was discussed at the last Lead Ad-Hoc meeting. I will provide you with the HHCU's position and ask that you provide this memorandum to all attendees.

The HHCU only recommends the use of a "True" High Efficiency Particulate Filter (HEPA) vacuum cleaner to collect lead dust. A true HEPA vacuum cleaner has a few features that most vacuum cleaners do not have, including: (1) A HEPA filter that is individually tested and rated as 99.97% efficient at 0.3 micron dust particle; (2) "O" rings or seals to prevent leakage around connecting points; and (3) most manufacturers' specifications state that the HEPA vacuum is designed to collect lead dust. I realize this specific type of vacuum cleaner is more expensive; but until it is proven that other types of vacuum cleaners are equally efficient we can only recommend a true HEPA vacuum cleaner.

To further clarify, any individual who disturbs lead-based paint and/or is responsible for removing lead dust should use a true HEPA vacuum cleaner. Using a vacuum cleaner other than a HEPA vacuum cleaner may create additional problems with lead contamination or lead exposure.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is sponsoring several vacuum cleaner studies, but the information is not available yet. Keep in mind that these studies are focusing on collection efficiency and are not focusing on exhaust air or possible recontamination of areas with lead dust. I hope this information is useful to you. Should you have any questions you can contact me at (919) 733-0820.

JJC/jwd