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EPA Rule Puts Spotlight on Lead Abatement Products

Posted by: *Diane Capuano*

The lead-paint abatement market has been in the spotlight the last couple years because of the [EPA's Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule](#) that went into effect in April of last year. As a result, many paint store owners are finding themselves in a position where they are being approached by professionals much more often for the products needed to safely and effectively contain lead paint or to clean up any potential lead dust in homes that were built prior to 1978.



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"If you're a lead-safe renovator, you certainly want to make sure you are doing an adequate cleanup job and doing it as professionally and efficiently as possible," said Cole Stanton, Vice President—National Accounts for Fiberlock Technologies.

Potential customers for lead abatement projects are extremely diverse. John J. Petroci III, president/CEO of Dumond Chemicals Inc., mentioned such potential prospects as general contractors, painting contractors, property management companies, schools, universities, highway departments, park and recreation departments and many more.

Petroci also pointed to the opportunity for paint removal and lead abatement in mature markets that are influenced by historical preservation. "The trend today is not to demolish a historic structure, but rather to restore and transform the property into viable space such as residential housing and lofts, retail outlets, restaurants, hospitality and commercial property management," he said.

Chas Wolfson of Samax Enterprises reported that paint stores can have success in the lead-removal market by educating themselves and looking for opportunities. He recommended looking specifically for restoration companies who do lead abatement work. "This is a new target market for independent paint retailers," he said. "I know of several stores who have had success in going out and soliciting this market. One decent-sized private chain in the Northeast is actively soliciting this type of work and has become a valued resource to these types of contractors."

Wolfson added that some of these projects can be quite large and can lead to other business. "The reason that the contractor started doing business with you might be because of your knowledge of lead abatement, but then this allows you to gain the painting side of the business," he said. "If you make yourself valuable to the customer, they will keep coming back."

The EPA lead rule, in effect since April 2010, specifically is cited for a reason that more attention is being paid to lead abatement projects. "Contractors performing renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes, child care facilities, and schools built before 1978 must be certified and must follow specific work practices to prevent lead contamination," explained Adam Newman of Sunnyside Corp.

Stanton advised paint stores to use the EPA website as a resource for connecting with [accredited training providers](#) and [certified renovation, repair and painting firms](#) in their areas.

The certified firms are potential customers for their lead abatement products. However, Stanton added, "Whether talking encapsulants, paint removers or lead-dust cleaners, dealers shouldn't be shy about reaching out to certified trainers. The certification programs feature a half-day of hands-on with the products. Networking with and supporting the training provider by supplying products is mutually beneficial and can lead to good things later on."

Stanton also advised retailers to explore the possibility of HUD grant money for lead mitigation projects. "Local dealers can capitalize on their deep roots and local knowledge to see what potential projects there are in their area," he said.

If you want to pursue this market, the key to success is to be educated and proactive. Petroci observed that employee training and product demonstrations are effective ways to impart knowledge.

"In order for paint and decorating retailers to be successful with paint removal products, along with effective in-store marketing and merchandising, they need to properly train their employees and demonstrate products," he said. "Product demonstrations are a powerful sales tool because 'seeing is believing.' Furthermore, a first-hand testimonial spawns both confidence and credibility during the sales process."

Petroci added that conducting test patches is the key to a successful removal project "An example would be not knowing the coatings history of a 175-year-old building. This requires that test patches be applied to identify the optimal removal system. Once the testing is completed, the end-user clearly understands the removal process, and both material and labor costs associated with the project are easily determined."

It is Petroci's recommendation that paint stores embrace the EPA's mandate as a means of differentiating their businesses from those that do not make the effort. He sees this as a chance for paint store personnel to educate their DIY consumers and to sell the benefits of hiring one of their professional painting contractor customers who have undergone the certification. He also suggests that paint stores have a certified individual on staff themselves.

"By investing the time having store personnel attend the course, getting certified and absorbing the cost of certification, paint and decorating retailers are proving that they have the best interest of their customers in mind and that they have the knowledge and expertise needed to offer advice pertaining to most, if not all painting projects," he said.

Jill Lusk Brand Manager, W.M. Barr, also recommended that a paint store have someone take the course. "Paint store personnel should take the eight-hour RRP class that contractors are required to take, so they will have the basic knowledge to converse with certified renovators and homeowners," she said.

Stanton likewise stressed the importance of product knowledge. "It's not necessary for them to take the course, but if the store has a full-time outside salesperson who wants to be really proficient in the market, I can see why they would consider doing that."

In addition, Stanton advised dealers to align with well-respected manufacturers who can provide strong technical support for all types of customers—whether it's a certified lead renovation contractor or a DIY consumer who is concerned about the presence of lead in his or her home.

"We at Fiberlock can help dealers with questions about mold, lead and asbestos that are at a higher level of technical knowledge," Stanton explained. "A dealer may get a tough question on these subjects every once in a while. We get these types of questions every single day."

Newman stressed the need for paint stores to be knowledgeable on the subject of safe lead removal. "We're able to educate the stores with product knowledge so they can also pass that on to the contractor. The bottom line is manufacturers need to educate the stores," he said.

Tags: [Dumond Chemicals](#), [EPA](#), [Fiberlock Technologies](#), [lead rule](#), [Samax](#), [Sunnyside Corporation](#), [W.M. Barr](#)

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