



6 June 2007

Esperance residents urged to clean dust from homes

The Department of Health is providing free use of specialised vacuum cleaners to encourage Esperance residents to remove any sources of lead or nickel dust from in and around their homes.

Director of Environmental Health Jim Dodds said the Department of Health and the Government Chemistry Centre visited the properties of 11 residents who had elevated blood lead levels to take dust and soil samples on 14-15 April 2007.

Residents had been directly advised by mail of the results of testing in their homes.

“The results showed that lead dust has impacted upon some homes in the vicinity of the Port, so it is important that any traces of lead or nickel-containing dust are removed from in and around homes, particularly those with young children,” Mr Dodds said.

“Dust samples were taken from a variety of locations including cupboards, shelves, windows, doors, cubby houses and other outdoor structures.

“Results from 21 dust swabs taken from inside the properties showed lead contents from 0.014 to 1.1 micrograms per square centimetre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$), and 22 dust swabs from outside the properties showed lead contents of between 0.16 and 34 $\mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$.

Mr Dodds said all Esperance residents would be mailed a brochure on how to manage possible lead dust around the home by mid June. The brochure can also be obtained from the Shire of Esperance or by calling the Department of Health on 9388 4997.

“To assist the Esperance community in this cleaning operation the Department of Health has purchased specialised HEPA vacuum cleaners, which are highly effective particulate air vacuum cleaners that do not recirculate dust,” he said.

“Cleaning using standard household vacuum cleaners is not recommended as these stir up dust and are likely to leave traces of the dust in the home.

“The Department’s HEPA vacuum cleaners are available free of charge to residents for a 24-hour period through calling Coates Hire on 9071 5000.”

Mr Dodds said analysis of the soil samples indicated that lead and nickel levels were below the recommended national guidelines.

“Analysis of the 14 soil samples taken from six properties in the Esperance townsite found lead levels in the range of 0.9 - 9.8 mg/kg and nickel levels of 0.2 -12 mg/kg, which are well below the recommended national guidelines,” Mr Dodds said.

The National Environmental Protection Measures (NEPM) guideline for lead levels in residential soil is 300 mg/kg and the level for nickel in soil is 600mg/kg.

For more information on health issues visit www.health.wa.gov.au/envirohealth/home or phone 9388 4946.

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