

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH BRANCH

Occupational Health Watch: January 2017

California workers still exposed to lead at harmful levels

A new report from the Occupational Health Branch presents data on adults with elevated blood lead levels (BLLs)—now defined by health agencies as 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) and higher. Between 2012 and 2014:

- More than 6,000 workers were identified with an elevated blood lead level.
- The majority were male, aged 20–59, and had a Hispanic surname.
- 60% of workers with BLLs $\geq 10 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ worked in the manufacturing sector, followed by 14% in construction.

Long-term lead exposure at levels above 5–10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ increases the risk for health effects such as hypertension, kidney disease, cognitive dysfunction, and adverse reproductive outcomes.

Even higher blood lead levels continue to be a problem among California workers. Blood lead levels of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ and above were reported among workers in industries that handle lead-containing bullets and firearms, and metal-related and construction industries.

For more information, see the full report: Blood Lead Levels in California Workers, 2012–2014.

Photo: A worker wearing protective gear prepares a surface for painting.



Resources

BLL data report

Occupational Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Email Occupational Health Watch (OHW@cdph.ca.gov) with feedback or change of address.

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