



LEAPP Alliance

Control of Lead at Work  
Regulations and  
Lead-Safe Training



## Document Control

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## Introduction

The National Open College Network (NOCN) and the Lead Containing Materials Association (LCMA) have discussed development of training courses to address the gap in lead-safe instruction in the UK.

This document explains some of the key points made in the [Control of Lead at Work Act 2002 \(CLAW\)](#) and [Approved Code of Practice \(ACOP\)](#) mandate in the context of training in construction, renovation and repainting.

## Enforcement

It should be noted that HSE enforcements of the CLAW are rare, but do happen. The [HSE public register](#) shows 18 breaches of the CLAW in the last 10 years by 7 different defendants in Great Britain. The total fines were £130,363.

In addition, there were 32 prohibition or improvement notices in the last 5 years. Included in these is the notice “*You undertake work which is liable to expose employees to lead and said employees have not been provided with suitable and sufficient **information, instruction and training.***”

This shows that lead using business should be concerned about HSE enforcement and should give workers appropriate training.



# Requirements of the CLAW 2002

## Training

The CLAW regulations state that “*every employer who undertakes work which is liable to expose an employee to lead shall provide that employee with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.*” The regulations go on to list what needs to be included.

This in itself justifies the provision of training for employees and those who provide that training. Given the ubiquity of lead in the UK domestic, industrial, and even agricultural, environments this means a considerable volume of training courses can be expected to be required. The ACOP expands on the contents of the training material.

## Who Does It Apply To?

The CLAW not only applies to employees, but duties extend to anyone “*who may be affected*” with the exception of medical surveillance and persons not on site.

This means that duties under CLAW will include risks to customers when they are in the premises. An example, could be replacement window fitters working in an occupied home. It seems that the employer should provide “*monitoring, information and training and dealing with accidents*” to not only their employees, but customers as well.

It should also be noted that CLAW applies to self-employed workers as the employer and the employee.

## Risk Assessments

An employer is required to conduct a risk assessment before carrying out “*work which is liable to expose any employees to lead*”. If there are more than 5 employees, then a record must be kept of the steps taken to prevent or control exposure to lead. The contents of the risk assessment are listed in the legislation.

It would seem vital that training is needed to enable employers to meet this requirement. The ACOP states “*Whoever carries out the assessment should have adequate knowledge, training and expertise in understanding hazard and risk*”.

## Exposure

Control of exposure is described and prioritised in the regulations, but uses ambiguous terms such as ‘*suitable*’, ‘*appropriate*’ and ‘*adequate*’. Any training course should expand on what these terms mean in practice and what procedures are needed to comply. This is further discussed in the ACOP.

Control of lead exposure by inhalation is only considered adequate if “*occupational exposure limit for lead is not exceeded*”. Training in what this limit is and how to measure it is needed together with use and maintenance of PPE.

Furthermore, the CLAW regulations require provisions by the employer “*to protect the health of his employees from an accident, incident or emergency related to the presence of lead*”. Training on how to develop and deploy procedures, facilities and systems is needed to meet this requirement.



## Activities

The ACOP has a list of activities involving lead or lead compounds that are liable to result in significant exposure, unless controlled, including:

- Working on lead at over 500°C
- Anything that produces lead dust (Assuming this means dust contaminated by any lead compound)
- Abrasion including cutting with power tools
- Spraying lead paint or other lead compounds
- Work with low solubility lead compounds (Why not high solubility?)
- Paint stripping
- Craft work in lead sheet
- Production of lead alkyl
- Working inside tanks that have contained leaded petrol

Some activities are considered to not present a significant risk, including:

- Mining lead ore (galena)
- Plumbing and soldering below 500°C
- Work with materials that contain less than 1% lead (The risk assessment should determine if this is the case)
- Working with lead compound containing materials that are wet enough to prevent dust production, e.g. paint
- Handling clean, solid lead

Some of these exclusions are surprising. Consider that British Lead themselves list several [safety precautions](#) when working with solid lead.

The activities that could present a significant risk may be found in a wide range of trades and industries particularly working on older buildings which includes decorating, window replacement, renovation and demolition.

Of course, lead exposure can come from many other sources, not covered by the CLAW, which can be encountered at work or elsewhere, e.g. ceramics, cosmetics, water or soil.

## Surveillance

Every employee who might have “*significant*” exposure to lead must be under medical surveillance. The regulations specify how and what needs to be done which basically means blood test. This will require training of employees responsible for complying with these parts of the regulations.

The ACOP does not help clarify “*significant*”, but does define it as half the occupational limit, a substantial risk of ingesting lead, or lead in a form that can be absorbed through the skin. “*Substantial*” is interpreted as when food, drink or smoking materials can be contaminated from work surfaces, clothing or skin. This is a broad definition so training in the details is needed.