



LEAD-COATED COPPER (LCC)

What you should know if you're considering the use of lead-coated copper in new construction or renovation in Boston

The use of **lead-coated copper (LCC)** metal is increasing in buildings in Boston. Traditionally used for weatherproofing limited building surfaces – LCC has gained widespread popularity for sheathing outdoor surfaces during building construction and renovation. In Boston, there has been one documented case of elevated lead in a child linked to the use of lead-coated copper.

What is lead-coated copper? What does it look like?

Lead-coated copper is a metal used in building construction and renovation. It is produced by dipping a copper sheet in hot molten lead, coating both sides with pure lead. It is used because it is an attractive, strong, malleable weatherproof material, that is easy to install and long-lasting. It is usually used in flashing and roofing systems as well as decorative sheet metalwork. Once exposed to the natural elements, it weathers to a dull silver grey color.

How much lead is in LCC?

Lead-coated copper metal panels contain 12 to 15 lbs. of lead per 1,000 square feet. As the lead oxidizes, it gives off dust over the life of the material – as high as 800 times the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection clean-up standards for soil.

How is lead harmful to health?

Metallic lead and lead dust are toxic, especially to children and can damage their brain development, nervous system, liver, and kidneys. Children can become poisoned by inhaling lead dust or putting items that have lead or lead dust on them in their mouths. Lead dust can also be harmful to adults, particularly pregnant women.

What is the risk to the public of LCC?

One case of elevated lead in a child has been linked to the use of lead-coated copper in Boston. In that case, the LCC was low enough to give the child direct access to the material. Further study is being done to determine the degree of health risk to the public at large.

What should I do if I work with or come in contact with lead-coated copper?

Eating, drinking, or smoking after touching lead can present a significant health risk. If you are installing or working with lead-coated copper, minimize your exposure by wearing protective or disposable clothing, proper respiratory, face and eye protection, and disposable gloves (in accordance with OSHA 1910.1025, 1926.62 NIOSH).

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You should also take steps to protect children you may come in contact with. For instance, if you come into direct contact with the metal, wash your hands and your clothes immediately. Wash clothes separately from general household laundry – especially children’s clothes! Wipe off shoes before entering a building or residence. To get tested for lead poisoning, call the BPHC’s Childhood Lead Program below.

Should LCC be used in new construction or building renovation?

Similar looking copper sheathing materials without lead are readily available for use in construction and renovation. Further research and monitoring is being done in Boston to evaluate health risks and environmental contamination due to LCC. Alternatives to LCC should be considered for surfaces that can be touched or that can weather onto areas accessible to children and the public.