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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to discuss the Agency's efforts to prevent lead-based paint poisoning of our nation's children. Lead is a pervasive problem and many offices at EPA have various activities occurring to protect public health and the environment from lead. My responsibilities focus on the lead-based paint program and its activities.

BACKGROUND

Since the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (Title X) was enacted, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, together with the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Health and Human Services (HHS), the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), as well as our State partners, have made significant progress in eliminating childhood lead poisoning. In 1978, there were thirteen and one-half million children with elevated blood lead levels in the United States. By 2002, that number had dropped to 310,000 children, and it continues to decline. We expect the Centers for Disease Control to release updated data later this year. While we still have a significant challenge, particularly in reducing the incidence of lead-poisoning in low-income children, EPA is very proud of how its Federal, State, and private sector partners have coordinated their efforts with the public to better protect our children.

The Federal government has phased-out lead in gasoline, reduced lead in drinking water, reduced lead in industrial air pollution, and banned or limited lead used in products such as mini-blinds, food cans, glazed china and ceramic wear, crystal, and residential paint. States and municipalities have set up programs to identify and treat lead poisoning in children and to rehabilitate deteriorated housing. Parents, too, have greatly helped to reduce lead exposures to their children by cleaning and maintaining homes, having their children's blood lead levels regularly checked, and promoting proper nutrition.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

EPA has an active, multi-pronged program to combat the majority of the remaining cases of elevated blood lead levels in children, which is caused by leaded paint and related sources in older housing. EPA's primary goal is to prevent children from being exposed to lead based paint hazards and avoid the consequences associated with it. EPA's lead-paint program includes a national regulatory infrastructure, outreach and education programs aimed at those most at risk, and educating those who can help address the problem. The program also issues grants targeted to vulnerable populations whose children are at risk for lead-poisoning.

Regulations:

- EPA requires the training and certification of lead-based paint professionals who conduct lead-based paint inspection, risk assessment and abatement services in residences and child-occupied facilities, such as day care centers. The Agency has also set work practice standards for these professionals so that lead-based paint activities are conducted safely, reliably, and effectively (TSCA §402(a)). EPA requires that trainers be accredited to ensure that training programs provide quality instruction in current and effective work practices. In addition, EPA has authorized individual States, Tribes, and Territories to develop and administer training and certification programs, thereby extending the reach of these efforts. At present, 39 States, Puerto Rico, two Tribes, and the District of Columbia, assisted by federal grants, are authorized to carry out this program, with EPA retaining direct authority in the remaining areas.

- EPA, together with HUD, promulgated the Residential Lead-based Paint Real Estate Disclosure Rule (Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA) §1018). This rule mandates lead-based paint disclosure requirements for sales and rentals of pre-1978 housing, thereby helping to ensure that home buyers and renters are made aware of lead-based paint hazards before deciding on a dwelling, and, in the case of home buyers, guarantees the right to a lead inspection before purchase.

- The Pre-Renovation Education Rule implements a very simple concept: all owners/tenants of pre-1978 housing (about 15 million housing units) should be given basic information about lead-poisoning prevention before paint-disturbing renovations are started (TSCA §406(b)).

- EPA promulgated a rule on the Identification of Hazardous Levels of Lead in Dust and Soil (TSCA §403). This rule defines certain locations and conditions of lead-based paint, and specific levels of lead in dust and soil that are most likely to pose a health threat to children. These standards effect

disclosure provisions, the need to use trained, certified lead workers, and control and abatement requirements for Federally-owned and Federally-assisted housing. These standards were based in part on the level of lead in blood (10 ug/dl) that CDC considers to be elevated.

- EPA is developing a Renovation, Repair, and Painting Program rulemaking. On January 10, 2006, EPA issued a proposed rule for contractors working in residences. On June 5, 2007, EPA issued a supplemental proposal to extend these requirements to renovations in child-occupied facilities. Altogether, EPA received more than 250 comments on the proposed rules, and in addition received comment at five public meetings it held around the country

- The growing concern about lead in children's toys and jewelry has resulted in close cooperation between EPA and CPSC regarding concerns about the content of lead in toy jewelry. As you aware, CPSC is currently engaged in a rulemaking effort to address lead in children's jewelry. Earlier this year, EPA notified more than 120 companies of their obligations under TSCA section 8(e), which requires manufacturers, processors and distributors of chemical substances to inform the Agency if they obtain information that a substance presents a substantial risk to health or the environment. EPA is also nearing completion on a rule under TSCA section 8(d) which will require manufacturers of lead in consumer products intended for use by children to submit existing health and safety studies to EPA. Through this rule, EPA hopes to obtain existing studies that relate to lead content in children's products or children's exposure to lead from such products.

Outreach and Education:

EPA conducts outreach with potentially affected parties in the development of regulations to assist regulated parties in complying with regulations, inform citizens of their rights under these rules, inform the public about the nature of lead-based paint hazards, and provide guidance on how to reduce risks. Our partners at HUD and CDC partially fund these activities and provide technical support. This outreach includes:

- A bilingual National Lead Information Center (1-800 424-LEAD). The Center operates a national hotline handling more than 28,000 contacts per year, distributes 2200 documents annually and operates a national clearinghouse where best practices are shared.

- Development of materials, such as brochures and sample real estate disclosure forms, needed to comply with regulatory requirements.

- Creation and distribution of educational materials and national lead awareness campaigns for parents, homeowners and renters, medical professionals, child-care professionals, renovation contractors and "do-it-yourselfers," and others. This includes the award-winning, bilingual "Get the Lead Out" campaign to increase awareness of lead-paint hazards; and the "Keep Your MVP in the Game" campaign, with President Bush and the slogan: *Lead Poisoning Can Steal Your Child's Future.*

- Partnership programs with nonprofit groups and other government agencies to conduct lead awareness/education activities, particularly targeted to minority and urban populations often most at risk. This includes the "Chance of a Lifetime" campaign for Head Start Centers.

- Outreach to Spanish-speaking populations in the United States.

<u>Grants Targeting Low-Income and Other Vulnerable Populations</u>

- EPA has developed several grant programs targeted to populations still at risk for lead poisoning. These grants are intended to reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning in populations most at risk, and include grants targeted to:

- Federally recognized Indian tribes and tribal consortia: These grants support Tribal educational outreach and the establishment of baseline assessments of Tribal children's existing and potential exposure to lead-based paint and related lead-based paint hazards. These include a grant to the Houlton Band of the Maliseet Indians of Houlton, Maine. This grant includes several lead poisoning prevention workshops, such as a "Lead-free Babysitting" course for all tribal child care providers, a health fair where blood-lead screenings will be conducted, and lead risk assessments and inspections at the homes of young children.

- Low-income communities with older housing: These grants support the partnership of national organizations with community-based organizations and local governments to improve the environmental health of a community regarding lead poisoning prevention. One example is a grant to the Alliance for Healthy Homes which will partner with several local groups to serve community members from four low income populations. Activities will include lead-awareness training, lead-safe work practices training, and to address substandard housing conditions such as lead-based paint, through ordinance development

- Populations still at risk for elevated blood lead levels: These grants, which are intended to reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning in vulnerable populations, include projects to: (1) reduce

lead poisoning to target communities with high incidences of elevated blood-lead levels; (2) identify and reduce lead poisoning in under-studied communities with high potential for undocumented elevated blood-lead levels; and (3) develop tools to address unique and challenging issues in lead poisoning prevention, especially tools that are replicable and scalable for other communities. One example is the grant to the Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska, which supports blood- lead testing and home assessments through collaborative partnerships with Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Well Child public health clinics.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss some of EPA's contributions to prevent lead-based paint poisoning. Again, I want to thank you for your support and commitment to our work to better protect children from lead based paint poisonings. We remain committed to the goal of eliminating lead poisoning in children as a major health concern by 2010. I would be pleased to address your questions.