



Unite Lead Exposure Register

Do you believe you have been exposed to lead at work?

If so, you can record your details on the Unite Lead Exposure Register.

Why is Lead Exposure harmful?

There is growing scientific evidence that exposure to lead (including inhaling or swallowing it) and can cause the following adverse health effects:

- changes in the blood which might lead to anaemia
- effects on the nervous system
- effects on the kidney
- altered functioning of the testicles which could lead to infertility

An unborn child is at particular risk from exposure to lead, especially in the early weeks before a pregnancy becomes known. If you are a woman of child-bearing age, your employer should ensure that risk assessments take this into account and measures are put in place to protect you and your unborn child.

Members should be aware that lead is not usually absorbed through the skin – except in the form of lead alkyls (an additive to petrol) and lead naphthenate.

Exposure to lead

Workers in industrial processes which create lead dust, fume or vapour are at risk. These include:

- blast removal and burning of old lead paint
- stripping old lead paint from doors, windows etc.
- hot cutting in demolition and dismantling operations
- recovering lead from scrap and waste
- lead smelting, refining, alloying and casting
- lead-acid battery manufacture and breaking and recycling

- manufacturing lead compounds
- manufacturing leaded-glass
- manufacturing and using pigments, colours and ceramic glazes
- working with metallic lead and alloys containing lead, for example soldering

Prevention of Lead Exposure at work

The Control of Lead at Work Regulations 2002 imposes a duty on employers to prevent exposure to lead, or where this is not reasonably practicable, to control the level of exposure. There are legally binding occupational exposure limits but risks to health may arise when exposures are below these limits so the emphasis must be on prevention.

Employers have a legal duty to:

- assess the risk to health and decide whether and, if so, what precautions are needed to protect health;
- put in place systems of work and other controls, such as fume and dust extraction, to prevent or control exposure to lead, and keep equipment in efficient working order;
- provide washing and changing facilities, and places free from lead contamination to eat and drink;
- inform workers about the health risks associated with lead and the necessary precautions;
- provide training on control measures and using protective equipment correctly.

Employers should measure the level of lead in the air and disclose the results.

If exposure cannot be kept below the occupational exposure limit the employer must also:

- Issue respiratory protective equipment where there is a risk of inhaling or swallowing lead – and other protective equipment as determined by the risk assessment
- Measure the level of lead in the blood of individual workers. This is done by a doctor at the place of work.
- An appointed doctor or a nurse (under the supervision of a doctor) will take a small blood sample to measure the amount of lead it contains.

If the blood-lead level reaches the action level, the employer must investigate why and try to reduce it to below that level by:

- Reviewing the control measures and checking that they are working properly;
- Making sure that proper hygiene procedures are followed;
- Consulting relevant health professionals such as a doctor or occupational hygienist about any additional protective measures.

Health and Safety Executive guidance

The HSE publishes guidance and other resources on health effects from exposure to lead and action required by employers:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/lead/>

The Unite Lead Exposure Register

Unite has for some time maintained a register of members who believe they have been exposed to asbestos at work. It is held by Thompsons Solicitors. The database contains over 10,000 Unite members' details. It has a facility to run reports to identify members who were employed by the same company, or at the same site, at the same time to trace witnesses who may be able to support personal injury claims for other members who have developed asbestos related disease.

Unite is now extending the Register to record details of members who have been exposed to lead at work. Members who wish to record their exposure to lead can join the register by completing a questionnaire, a copy of which is attached to this circular.

Data Protection and the register

The information that each member provides will be stored on a database and shared with others, including other law firms instructed by Unite. The use of this data will be solely for the purposes of investigating personal injury claims on behalf of trade union members who may have been exposed to lead in the same or similar workplaces.

Unite Procedure

- 1 The questionnaire should be made available to members in workplaces where lead is or has been used in the past.
2. Members should return their completed questionnaire to their Regional Office.
3. The Regional Office should forward all completed questionnaires:

By email attachment to libraryenquiries@thompsons.law.co.uk and a copy to ianmcfall@thompsons.law.co.uk

Or by post to Ian McFall, Thompsons Solicitors, Maybrook House, 27-35 Grainger Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1TH

4. Thompsons will enter the member's details on the register.
5. Thompsons will send a letter to the member acknowledging receipt of the

completed questionnaire and confirming that the details have been entered on the database.

Unite Legal Services

Being included on the register does not mean that a legal case has been activated.

If a member requires legal assistance as a result of being diagnosed with an illness caused by exposure to lead - or any other personal injury – you should **contact Unite Legal Services directly on 0800 709 007** or telephone their local Unite office to be directly transferred to a Unite solicitor – **WITHOUT DELAY.**

For more information about Unite legal services please go to this link:

<https://www.unitelegalservices.org/>

Health and safety advice about lead exposure and other issues from Unite health and safety unit

You can email or phone Unite national health and safety advisers. Their names and contact details are:

Susan Murray: susan.murray@unitetheunion.org 0207 611 2596

Bud Hudspith: bud.hudspith@unitetheunion.org 07881 588917

UNITE LEAD EXPOSURE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this form and return it to your Regional Office.

1. SURNAME:
2. FORENAME(S):
3. HOME ADDRESS:

4. HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER:
5. EMAIL ADDRESS

6. Please give your Unite membership number:

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7. Are you a current member of Unite?

Yes

No

8. Have you been exposed to lead at work?

Yes

No

9. Please give details of where and when you were exposed to lead.

Name & Address of Employer and Address of site/location where exposure occurred	Dates of Employment From - To	Brief description of how you were exposed to lead.

Please provide any additional information on a separate sheet of paper and attach it securely to this questionnaire.

10. Please give the names and addresses of any workmates or witnesses who can confirm how you were exposed to lead.

11. Have you ever been told that you may be suffering from an illness caused by lead?

Yes

No

12. If **yes**, what condition are you suffering from?

13. When were you diagnosed?

14. Have you ever applied to the DWP for industrial injuries benefit for lead related disease?

Yes

No

15. If yes, when did you claim?

16. Have you ever previously obtained legal advice in connection with a compensation claim for a lead related illness? If yes, please give the name and address of the solicitors.

Yes

No

I confirm the content of this statement is true

I consent to this information being used by the union and its lawyers for the purpose of assisting personal injury claims.

Signed.....Dated.....

If you require legal assistance as a result of being diagnosed with a disease caused by lead exposure or to make a claim for any other personal injury you

should **contact Unite Legal Service on 0800 709 007** or your Regional Office **without delay**