

SAFETY COMMUNICATION

Key Changes to California's Lead Standard

What Employers in General Industry Need to Know



Effective January 1, 2025, California significantly revised its lead standards for general industry to better protect workers from harmful exposure. These updates reflect the latest scientific understanding of lead toxicity and aim to reduce health risks associated with occupational lead exposure.

Key Changes to the Lead Standard Include:***Lower Exposure Limits***

- The Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) is now 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, and the Action Level (AL) is 2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- A new schedule of Separate Engineering Control Air Limits (SECALs) has been introduced for specific tasks (5198 (e)(1)(C) Table 1).

Presumed Significant Lead Work (PSLW)

- Employers must assume PSLW is occurring when workers alter or disturb* certain materials or perform torch cutting on scrap metal.

- Interim protections must be provided before exposure assessments, including respirators (at least half-mask respirator with N100, R100, or P100 filters), protective clothing, medical surveillance, training, and posted warning signs.

Monitoring and Compliance

- Annual exposure monitoring is required for employees exposed above the AL but below 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- Employers must maintain a **written lead compliance program**, including documentation of infeasible controls and job rotation schedules.

Respiratory Protection and Clothing

- Respirators must be provided during PSLW.
- Clean protective clothing must be provided at least daily when exposures exceed 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Hygiene and Facilities

- Employers must provide an adequate number of washing facilities in compliance with section 3366.
- Change rooms must be made available when exposures exceed 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- Shower facilities must be made available to employees with exposures more than 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

* Subjecting to a process that may result in the release of lead dust, lead mist, lead fume, or other lead particles. Such processes include, but are not limited to, welding, torch cutting, brazing, torch soldering, melting, pouring, spraying, cutting, shredding, crushing, baling, grinding, polishing, machining, drilling, scraping, sanding, abrading, sweeping, raking and shoveling.

- Lunchroom facilities must be made available when employee exposures exceed 50 µg/m³.
- After 1/1/26, these facilities must be available at or above the PEL
- Employees must wash hands, exposed arms, and face before eating, drinking, or leaving the site and cannot enter personal vehicles while wearing contaminated PPE.

In addition, employers are required to establish, implement, and maintain effective written methods and schedules to maintain the cleanliness of drinking and washing facilities, change rooms, showers, and lunchrooms.

Medical Surveillance

- Blood lead testing is required before assignment and periodically thereafter for employees exposed at or above the AL.
- Medical removal is now required at lower blood lead levels.
- Employers must provide updated information to healthcare providers and affected employees.

Additional Updates

- New requirements for employee training, signage, and recordkeeping.
- Revised language for warning signs in areas where PSLW is performed or the AL may be exceeded.

Note: This is a summary of key updates to Section 5198. For complete details, including specific requirements and exceptions, please refer to the full regulation.

Resources

[California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5198. Lead.](#)

[Construction Lead Standard Executive Summary Lead in Construction: Information for Employers Model-Program-for-Lead-Compliance-in-Construction.docx](#)