United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics

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Selecting a Laboratory to Analyze Lead Samples

It is important to select a qualified laboratory because:

Results Can Vary. The results of lead testing are often used to show that a home is free of hazardous levels of lead in dust, soil or paint. Small mistakes in sampling procedures can produce results that have different meanings. In some cases, sampling mistakes may falsely show that a home is lead-safe or may falsely identify lead hazards. Make sure the lab you choose is part of the National Lead Laboratory Accreditation Program (NLLAP). NLLAP is a program designed to test a lab's ability to analyze dust wipes, soil and paint samples for lead. EPA and HUD regulations require the use of NLLAP-recognized laboratories when laboratory analysis of lead samples is required.

Supplies and Services are Different. Some laboratories work only with large industrial or commercial clients. Others provide help to those who need a few samples analyzed.

Price is Only One Factor to Consider. Laboratories that have higher prices may offer a better value if you consider the services that they provide and their attention to quality control.

Here is a list of questions to ask labs to help you determine if the lab has the services and capacity to meet your needs.

Topic	Questions to Ask

Accreditation	• Is the lab recognized by the EPA as accredited under NLLAP?
	  • Only use labs with NLLAP accreditation.
	  • Some states also regulate lead laboratories.

Types of Clients	• Are samples accepted from the general public? • Is there a minimum number of samples?
Samples Analyzed	• Are paint, dust, soil and/or water samples analyzed? • Are composite samples analyzed?
Cost and Turn-around Time	• What is the cost per sample for standard turn-around time? • What is the standard turn-around time? • Does the lab offer 24-hour turn-around? • Are there volume discounts?
Reporting	• How are the results provided? U.S. mail, fax and/or e-mail? • What units are used for reporting each type of sample result? For lead dust, it is easiest if results are reported in micrograms per square foot ($\mu g/ft^2$) and calculated using the measurements you provide. This saves time and reduces errors. • Are the results compared with appropriate federal, state or local standards to determine compliance?
Client Support	• Are sample collection materials provided, such as wipes, gloves, templates, tubes for submitting samples, and forms? • Are written sample collection directions provided? • Will the lab offer assistance over the phone? • Does the lab have a home sampling kit for lead?
Quality Control	• Will the lab provide blind quality control samples to check the accuracy and precision of the laboratory's procedures?

To obtain a current list of laboratories recognized by the EPA as accredited under the National Lead Laboratory Accreditation Program (NLLAP):

- Call the National Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD [5323]
- Visit epa.gov/lead/nllap

Call your state health department To obtain a current list of lead laboratories licensed by your state.

Visit epa.gov/lead/lead-dust-sampling-tech for more information about selecting a laboratory in Chapter 4: Selecting a Laboratory and Interpreting Results of the Lead Dust Sampling Technician Initial Training Course (EPA-740-B-26-010, January 2026)

Visit the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes website at https://www.hud.gov/lead.

Cleaning Up Is Important

- Small amounts of lead in dust can poison young children.
- Dangerous levels of lead dust may remain after working with paint, even if a work site looks clean.
- Workers may bring lead contaminated dust home.
- Cleaning protects children in homes where work is done, as well as children in the homes of workers.
- Simple cleaning techniques reduce dust lead levels.

This fact sheet was developed for lead dust sampling technicians, lead-based paint risk assessors, and lead-based paint inspectors.