



## Oil Field Employees Risk Bringing Lead Home

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Oil field workers potentially could transfer lead to their homes and put their children at risk for lead poisoning if they do not take certain safety precautions, suggests The Journal of the Oklahoma State Medication Association.

According to the article "Take Home Lead Exposure in Children of Oil Field Workers" by Fahad Khan, MPH, the Oklahoma Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (OCLPPP) found that oil field workers who are exposed to "pipe dope" could bring lead home if they don't follow necessary safety procedures.

Pipe dope is a threading compound that often contains high amounts of lead and is not easily removed from clothing or skin. It also can be transferred from workers' skin or clothing to their vehicles and homes.

"The OCLPPP has identified pipe dope containing lead along with lead-based paint hazards as the most likely cause of lead poisoning in at least four children, include two siblings, of three oil field workers working with pipe dope between 2006 and 2009," the article states. "Elevated environmental levels were found in work clothes as well as inside the laundry room washing machines which were used to wash work clothes along with other family clothes."

To prevent exposure, workers should use PPE such as oil-resistant gloves. They also should wash their hands, shower and change clothes after handling pipe dope to avoid subsequent lead exposure. Additionally, their work clothes should not be laundered with other clothes from home to prevent contamination.

Finally, employers must provide changing and showering facilities to workers handling pipe dope.

"Given the health hazards associated with pipe dope containing lead, employers and work-sites should also consider effective alternative options like lead free biodegradable pipe dopes or dope free connections," the article concludes.

NIOSH works to identify and prevent lead exposures in oil and gas workers and their families and currently has an ongoing field research study to identify chemical exposure risks in this employee population. Download the NIOSH fact sheet for more information.