

# Working Around Lead and Cadmium



Many worksites have areas where employees work with heavy metals, particularly lead and cadmium. Just because you don't work with it yourself, doesn't mean you are safe. You need to know just a few things to make sure you don't get an accidental exposure.

## The Basics:

### Lead:

It gets into your body by breathing dust or fume or eating and drinking materials that have been contaminated. In the short term it can cause increases in blood pressure, harm to a developing fetus and male reproductive problems, and serious fatigue. In the long term or at high levels it can cause muscle and joint pain, memory problems, disruption of sleep, and stomach problems. At very high levels, both kidney and severe brain damage can occur.

### Cadmium:

It enters the body the same way. In the short term it can cause eye, nose and throat irritation, headache, and dizziness. At high levels it can cause chills, fever, chest pains and breathlessness. Long-term exposures can cause harm to the lungs and kidneys and may even cause cancer.

### Jobs where metal exposure can occur:

- Scrap metal handling
- Foundries
- Demolition of old structures
- Paint Stripping
- Cutting or burning painted surfaces
- Machining and grinding metal
- Welding
- Battery manufacturing operations
- Brazing operations
- Soldering operations
- Ceramic production



## How do I protect myself from these materials?

- Do not enter into areas where lead or cadmium are used or produced.
- Do not come into contact with workers who are exposed to these materials during the workday, unless they have showered or changed.
- Do not store or consume food or drink, including cigarettes in areas where these materials are generated.
- If you come in contact with contaminated materials, wash your hands thoroughly.
- Do not walk through the smoke generated by burning or cutting metals.