

# SURFACE PREPARATION SAFETY



## The importance of surface preparation

Surface preparation is one of the most important steps in a successful paint job because paint adheres most readily to a properly prepared surface. The presence of dirt, dust, grease, flaking paint, holes or cracks severely detracts from paint's ability to form a strong, long-lasting bond with a surface.

## Serious health and safety hazards

### Dust and debris

Scraping, sanding and patching are necessary for nearly all jobs and can create fine dust particles or fragments. Extended exposure to this 'nuisance dust' can be hazardous to your health without the use of a NIOSH-certified, properly fitted respirator (rated N100 or above) with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter.

### Mold and mildew

Do not scrape or sand a surface covered with mold or mildew, as this can release airborne spores that spread. More information on identifying and mitigating these potential hazards can be found in the Dunn-Edwards Mold & Mildew brochure at [dunnedwards.com](http://dunnedwards.com)

### Lead and asbestos

Dust and debris may contain lead or asbestos, which greatly increases the risk of personal injury if proper safety precautions are not followed.

**ASBESTOS** is a toxic carcinogenic that is often found in construction materials of older buildings. Inhalation of asbestos fibers can lead to dangerous lung conditions. Asbestos may be found in houses built before 1978, mostly in spackling compound, wallboard joint compound, and sprayed acoustic ceiling texture. Other asbestos-containing building materials include insulation and asbestos-cement shingles and siding. Inhaling asbestos can cause asbestosis (scarring of the lungs), lung cancer, and mesothelioma (cancer of the chest cavity lining). Exposures are cumulative, and smokers are particularly at risk.

**LEAD-BASED PAINT** is toxic and most dangerous when it is peeling, chipping, chalking and cracking—also during renovation, a repair, or simply a new coat of paint. Lead-based paint is mostly found in houses built before 1950, although residential use of lead-containing paint was not banned until 1978. Hazards of lead include:

- :: Lead poisoning through ingesting or inhaling can cause brain damage, especially in children under age six.
- :: Pregnant women can pass lead to their unborn children, and nursing mothers can pass lead through breast milk to infants.



*Lead-based paint and asbestos are often found in older buildings, such as houses built prior to 1978.*

## How to determine the presence of lead or asbestos

If the presence of lead or asbestos is suspected to be present, **Dunn-Edwards strongly recommends having a professional test all surfaces before beginning surface preparation.** If either are found to be present, it is essential to wear a properly fitted, NIOSH-approved N100 filter mask while removing it.

### How to find state-certified abatement professionals

**Certified Lead-Abatement Contractors:** Professionals skilled at removing lead-based paint can be found at [epa.gov/lead](http://epa.gov/lead)

### Certified Asbestos-Abatement Contractors:

Professionals skilled at removing all types of asbestos-containing building materials, including acoustic ceiling textures, insulation and asbestos-cement shingles, can be found at [epa.gov/asbestos](http://epa.gov/asbestos)

### Other DIY options

**For lead:** Purchase a home test kit at a local hardware or home improvement store. Most tests involve mixing a testing solution and applying it to a painted surface. If the solution changes color, the paint contains lead. Be aware that these kits only detect the presence of lead, not the amount or danger level of the lead. They also cannot distinguish between true lead-based paint (up to 50% lead) and paint contaminated with residues of leaded gasoline exhaust.

**For asbestos:** Send paint chip samples to a certified laboratory for chemical analysis. If asbestos-containing material is suspected, contact an asbestos-abatement contractor to investigate and collect a sample for a certified laboratory. Taking a sample yourself is strongly recommended against.

Prior to interrupting the surface in any way, it is important to follow correct safety procedures to avoid harmful conditions that may be found in some buildings.

## Getting started: what you'll need

**Materials and equipment:** Many factors (job size, building age, etc.) determine what you will need, such as patching materials, sandpaper, wire brushes, scrapers, drop cloths and rags. These materials and much more can be found at your local Dunn-Edwards® store. For smaller exterior projects, a garden hose may be needed, whereas a pressure washer is recommended for larger exterior projects.

**Protective clothing and equipment:** Wear protective clothing and equipment, including a properly fitted NIOSH-certified respirator or filter mask, depending on the work you are doing. Also essential for safety are gloves, goggles, coveralls, long-sleeve shirts, long pants, hats and shoe covers, depending on our project's scope.



## Surface preparation safe procedures

### Before you begin

- :: Work on one room at a time. Remove plants, pets and as much furniture as you can. Cover the remaining furniture, carpets and drapery so dust or paint won't penetrate porous materials.
- :: Close off the work area by taping polysheeting over doors, windows, floors and other exposed surfaces.
- :: Turn off forced-air heating and air-conditioning systems and cover vents with plastic.

### Washing surfaces

- :: Wash the work surfaces with a solution of water and an all-purpose household cleaner. If using TSP (tri-sodium phosphate) in water, be sure to wear rubber gloves.

## Scraping and sanding

- :: Only allow those who are properly protected into the work area.
- :: Do not use a belt-sander, propane torch, heat gun, dry scraper or dry sandpaper on surfaces that may contain lead or asbestos.
- :: Use a spray bottle to wet the surface before scraping and sanding, and use wet/dry sandpaper or sponges.
- :: Follow general surface preparation instructions about patching. Also, your local Dunn-Edward store's Associates will be happy to help guide you.

## Using paint removers

- :: Paint removers are another option for removing paint from wood surfaces, and they don't create dust like sanding and scraping do.
- :: Wear proper protection, including gloves and goggles, and work in a well-ventilated area to avoid breathing harmful fumes.
- :: Follow label directions for safe handling, cleanup and disposal of materials.

## Cleanup and disposal

- :: Large pieces can be swept. For the smaller debris, it's best to use a HEPA filter-equipped vacuum cleaner, which can be rented from stores that carry remodeling tools. When finished, dampen the dust collected with water prior to emptying the vacuum.
- :: Mist drop cloths and plastic sheeting before rolling them up to suppress dust.
- :: Use heavy-duty plastic garbage bags to safely dispose of dust and debris.

## Final washing and rinsing

- :: Have plenty of sponges, rags and buckets on hand.
- :: Wash all surfaces thoroughly with a detergent solution, then rinse with clean water. Use one bucket for the cleaning solution, and one bucket for rinsing. Because dust and debris travel easily, make sure to wash all areas—including floors, stairs and other horizontal surfaces—even if they are not going to be painted.
- :: Change the rinse water frequently (at least once for each room being cleaned) and rinse or replace rags and sponges often.

## Personal hygiene

- :: Don't eat, drink or smoke while in the work area.
- :: After working, always wash your hands and face before eating, drinking or smoking.
- :: Shower as soon as possible after cleanup.
- :: Wash your clothes and wipe off your shoes.

*Please note that these suggestions are provided as a service to you. We are unable to guarantee or be responsible for the results obtained by these procedures. Before attempting any of these methods, test them on an inconspicuous area. If you have questions, please contact or visit a Dunn-Edwards store.*



**CAUTION!** Scraping or sanding surfaces of older buildings (especially pre-1978) may release dust containing lead or asbestos. EXPOSURE TO LEAD OR ASBESTOS CAN BE VERY HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH. Wear a NIOSH-approved N100 particulate filter mask to avoid breathing dust. Use a HEPA vacuum for cleanup, and finish by water-washing all surfaces. For more information call U.S. EPA's lead hotline at 1-800-424-LEAD, or visit [epa.gov/lead](http://epa.gov/lead) or [epa.gov/asbestos](http://epa.gov/asbestos)—or contact your state or local Health Agency.

**Other How-To brochures can be found in-store and online here:**



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