

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

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Gary Garver, Director
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Dear Director Garver:

In finalizing my article for the AUG/SEP, 2000, Simply News, I reread my statement that the Lead Safe Columbus Program appears to be using the "Miner's Canary" approach. Since this view is in direct contradiction to your statement at the first Stakeholders' Meeting, I figure I need to explain my statement to you.

It seems to me that the program depends on testing children, who come in voluntarily, the best way you can, for lead in their blood. This generates a group of houses which can be tagged with the lead paint syndrome. An inspector is sent out to verify that the walls inside are powdering lead into the house and/or outside into the soil and atmosphere. Then remediation can be begun, either by the family with instruction from the City, or by a knowledgeable work crew, paid for by the family.

If the City were to make a building code change and prohibit lead paint in and on any housing structure, and to concentrate on meeting that goal within five years, with adequate funds, the problem could be licked. I am not suggesting that this program would be simple, but it would attack the problem of lead poisoned children head-on.

The concurrent step would be to test the children living in that lead housing, which is where the Health Dept comes in. Testing of kids in lead housing could be more expeditiously accomplished, having the hazard identified up front. More parents would be willing to have their children tested if the hazard is identified up front.

Instead of encapsulation or other means of abatement, resulting from discovery of the damaged children, we would be testing the housing first. This puts the horse before the cart and eliminates the Miner's Canary charge. The housing could be prioritized for remediation in cooperation with the Health Dept's evaluation of the family's damage.

I am not recommending that the lead housing be torn down, but abated. I am recommending

that families be removed from the premises for health reasons while the abatement goes on, if the poisoning is significant. The City should have a program to relocate them, probably at City expense, since everyone is assuming that the family is in poverty. Condemnation of the housing is an easy way out, but would impose even greater hardships on the family, if used indiscriminately, and exacerbate the housing shortage.

The current housing shortage due to long-term neglect by the City Fathers and the Business Community, makes the elimination of lead from the existing housing a serious problem, because of the need to find temporary alternate housing for the damaged family. But using voluntary testing of children as the starting point simply does not cover enough housing to stop the ongoing damage to children. This is what I mean by claiming we have a Miner's Canary approach to the problem.

Respectfully submitted, Art Strauss, 187 Acton Road, Columbus, Ohio
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