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PROTECTION FROM LEAD POISONING IS NEEDED NOW – NOT LATER

By Scott A. O'Mara

This newsletter regarding lead poisoning is based upon studies and articles done by the World Health Organization, WebMD, Wikipedia, the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic. All of these organizations and sources have a commonality regarding the serious nature of lead poisoning.

There is a consensus that lead poisoning can occur over a period of months or years, and even a very small amount of such poisoning can be dangerous because of its impact. There is also agreement that lead poisoning can potentially be prevented by eliminating or limiting the exposures people have to lead, or by taking additional proactive measures.

Lead poisoning occurs when the presence of lead builds up in various body systems over a period of months or years. Awareness of the dangers posed by lead exposure has led to the passage of legislation regarding this problem. In 1978, the Federal Government banned the use of lead in paint and outlawed the usage of paint containing lead in the construction of new homes.

Lead exposure can occur through contaminated air, water, dust and food products in certain situations. An especially high level of possible lead exposure is associated with contaminated air and soil. Dangerous also is the lead exposure which occurs with batteries, and of special concern are fires in buildings containing lead paint.

A Mayo Clinic discussion regarding lead poisoning contains this statement:

Lead poisoning occurs when lead builds up in the body, often over months or years. Even small amounts of lead can cause serious health problems.

Obviously, each individual will respond somewhat differently to lead exposure.

The Mayo Clinic article goes on to state:

Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in older buildings are common sources of lead poisoning in children. Other sources include contaminated air, water and soil. Adults who work with batteries, do home renovations or work in auto repair shops also might be exposed to lead.

The Mayo Clinic also notes that people exposed to lead “can bring it home on their clothes”. This is especially true for those who “work in auto repair, mining, pipe fitting, battery manufacturing, painting, construction and *certain other fields*”.

The exposures to lead in the air are vast and numerous. Such exposures include structure fires, vehicle fires, garage fires and wildland fires, among others. Structure fires may involve lead paint in houses built prior to 1978, and vehicle fires may involve burning batteries. Of special concern also are firing ranges, which the Mayo Clinic identifies as another source of lead exposure because of the lead bullets. In some firing ranges — such as the City of San Diego Shooting Range --- the office and/or restroom may be very close to the firing line, compounding the problem.

Significantly, the City of San Diego Shooting Range was assessed with three violations on 2/19/20 based on much-needed updates and changes which are required following an inspection of all four ranges by an Environmental Health Specialist employed by the County of San Diego. Those violations are as follows:

- (1) The *first violation* was for the City’s failure to meet both California and Federal standards regarding hazardous waste.
- (2) The *second violation* was for the City’s failure to meet state and Federal standards regarding the proper disposal of hazardous waste. The inspection found that the range’s pollutants exceeded both California and Federal standards.
- (3) The *third violation* was for the City’s failure to operate the range in a manner to minimize the risk of fire, explosions, or the sudden release of hazardous waste or water.

All three violations were mandated to be corrected by June 1, 2020. On May 12, 2022, the City of San Diego Shooting Range was closed.

An NBC-7 news report reflected the medical opinion of Dr. Richard Clark, Director of Toxicology at U.C.S.D., regarding the dangerous level of lead exposure at the range. However, the City of San Diego decided not to proceed with correcting the existing problem by providing a complete system to remove the toxic exposures to lead particulates through the installation of a safety unit. Failure to take this action allows more lead dust to circulate.

Of note, the collection units needed to protect people from lead exposure at the range would have cost only \$184,000. Not spending that amount does *not* mean that \$184,000 was saved, as that amount is trivial compared to the costs of treating people dealing with lead toxicity.

All these exposures cause symptomatology in many people, and this includes a wide range of different symptoms. Of note is the fact that it may take some time for these symptoms to develop, as each individual is different. It could take months --- or even years --- before the symptoms are noticeable.

Attached to this newsletter is documentation regarding some of the possible symptoms of lead poisoning, but this list is not all-inclusive. Again, it is important to realize that each person reacts differently to such poisoning. It can affect your bones, your nervous system, your kidneys, your eyes (in the form of cataracts) – even your teeth. All these body parts and others have been linked to lead exposures.

Once a lead exposure has been established and lead is found in your system, that then opens the door of access to medical care to cure or relieve the effects of this injury. Again, each individual responds differently to the lead particulates in their system. Implantation of lead in human bone structure may take some time to develop before there is an awareness of this problem.

According to Wikipedia:

As of 2013, lead-based ammunition production is the second largest annual use of lead in the US, accounting for over 84,800 metric tons consumed in 2013, second only to the manufacture of storage batteries. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cannot regulate cartridges and shells, as a matter of law. Lead birdshot is banned in some areas, but this is primarily for the benefit of the birds and their predators, rather than humans. Contamination from heavily used gun ranges is of concern to those who live nearby. Non-lead alternatives include copper, zinc, steel, tungsten-nickel-iron, bismuth-tin and polymer blends such as tungsten-polymer and copper-polymer.

In the Workers' Compensation system, cumulative trauma is understood as a method of injury, and for safety officers, the exposures to potential injury are numerous. The symptoms of lead poisoning also are numerous – as noted in the attached chart – and this list is not all-inclusive, as each person will have an individual response to such poisoning, and the manifestation of symptoms may occur a long time after the exposure.

The goal is to establish protection for you against the possibility of lead poisoning. One aspect regarding which we are aware is the transportation of lead particulates from your work to your domestic situation through having the particulates embedded in your clothing as you get into your car and then take them home with you. Your family can then be exposed when they get into your car.

The existing scientific studies and findings mandate the continuing need to minimize exposures to lead poisoning. This poisoning impacts not only people at the range, but also people in the community.

The solution to lead poisoning begins with an awareness of the potential problem, followed by a change carried out by employers to protect their workers and their families. Without these protections, the exposures to lead will continue and create more medical harm for affected workers and their families.

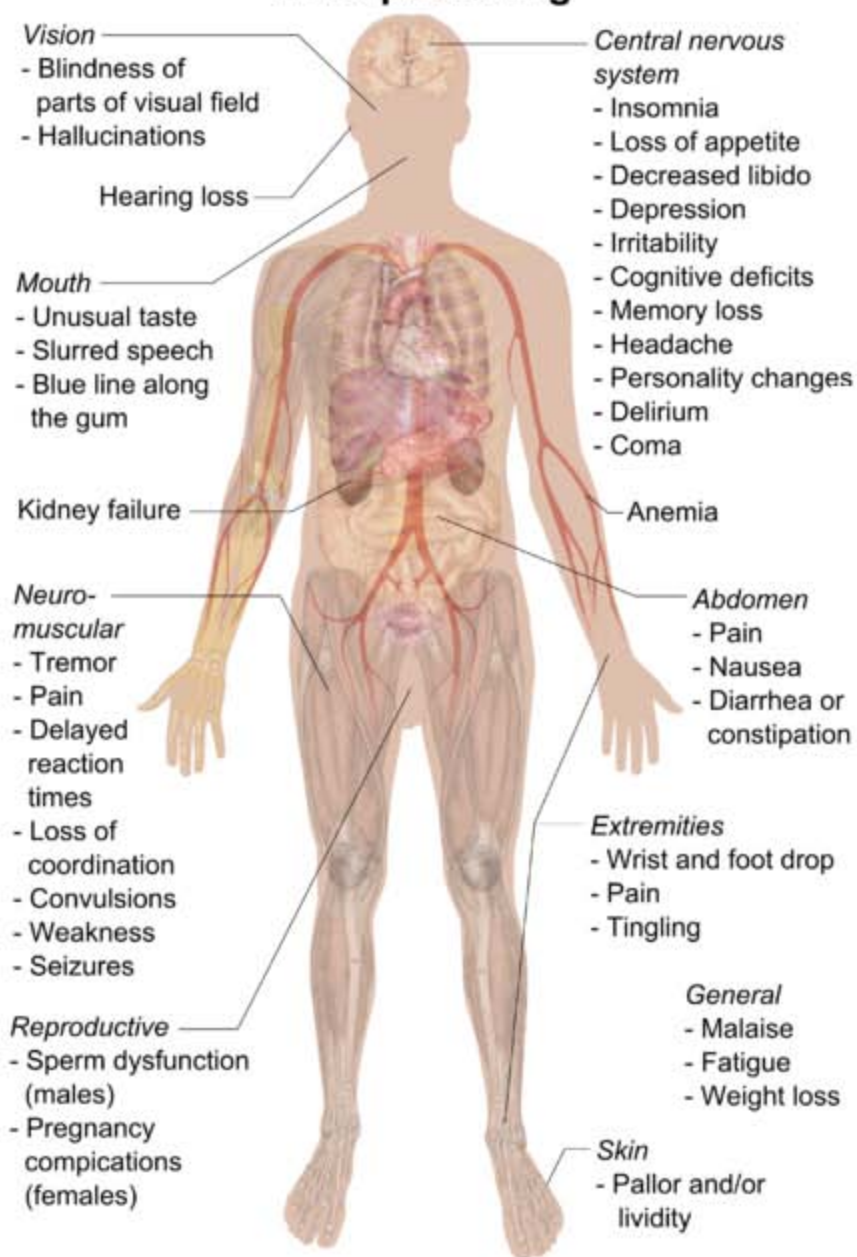
On June 9, 2022 Cal/OSHA did an inspection of the City of San Diego Shooting Range, regarding Lead Exposure.

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<p>THE LAW OFFICES OF SCOTT A. O'MARA</p> <p>2370 Fifth Ave. San Diego, CA 92101</p> <p>4344 Latham St. – Ste. 250 Riverside, CA 92501</p> <p>1-800-LAW-1199 / (1-800-529-1199) 619-583-1199 / 951-276-1199 www.law1199.com</p>	<p>BOBBITT, PINCKARD & FIELDS, A.P.C.</p> <p>8388 Vickers St. San Diego, CA 92111</p> <p>4344 Latham St. – Ste. 250 Riverside, CA 92501</p> <p>858-467-1199 www.coplaw.org</p>
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NOTICE: *Making a false or fraudulent Workers' Compensation claim is a felony subject to up to 5 years in prison or a fine of up to \$50,000 or double the value of the fraud, whichever is greater, or by both imprisonment and fine.*

Some Symptoms of Lead poisoning



Above chart from WIKIPEDIA

Law offices of Scott O'Mara www.law1199.com

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