

Rhode Island Landlord Faces Fines for Failing to Warn Tenants about Lead Paint

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(Boston, Mass. – January 20, 2010) – A Rhode Island landlord faces penalties for allegedly violating federal lead-based paint disclosure requirements. These violations potentially put tenants at risk of exposure to lead hazards.

In June 2008, an EPA inspection found that John Laughter had not provided lead disclosure information to tenants in four Woonsocket units that were built before 1978. EPA is seeking up to \$11,000 for each of these violations. At the time of the inspection, Mr. Laughter owned fifteen-units in three apartment buildings located in Woonsocket, RI.

The purpose of the Disclosure Rule is to give tenants adequate information about the risks associated with lead paint so that they can make informed decisions before signing a lease agreement

Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to lead paint exposure, which can cause developmental impairment, reading and learning disabilities; impaired hearing; reduced attention span, hyperactivity and behavioral problems. Adults with high lead levels can suffer difficulties during pregnancy, high blood pressure, nerve disorders, memory problems and muscle and joint pain.

Federal law requires that property owners, property managers and real estate agents leasing or selling housing built before 1978 provide the following information to tenants and buyers: an EPA-approved lead hazard information pamphlet, called Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home; a lead warning statement; statements disclosing any known lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards; and copies of all available records or reports regarding lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards. This information must be provided to tenants and buyers before they enter into leases or purchase and sales agreements. Property owners, property managers and real estate agents equally share responsibility for providing lead disclosure information and must retain copies of records regarding lead disclosures for three years.

More information: Lead paint disclosure enforcement in New England (www.epa.gov/ne/enforcement/leadpaint/index.html)