



Welcome to February's **Faith in Maintenance** email bulletin. Every month we will be sending you a short reminder of some of the things that you might do to make sure that your place of worship stays in tiptop condition. This month we are going to think about **lead paint safety**.

You can view an illustrated version of this bulletin [online](#).

Things to think about...

Oak, chestnut and certain other hardwoods are normally very durable and can often be left untreated when used in places of worship. On the other hand, softwoods, such as pine and fir, are generally less durable and need to be painted to protect them from decay. In the past, builders and joiners would often have used lead paint to protect such surfaces. Lead paint comprises lead pigment (usually lead carbonate - known as 'white lead') bound in oil. This white coloured paint could then be used in its natural state or tinted with various pigments. Historically, linseed oil was used as the binder with turpentine added to determine the required finish - either matt or semi-gloss.

Lead paint was popular until the 1960s, particularly on timber and metalwork. However, toxicity concerns mean that the supply of lead carbonate based paint is now restricted by law for use on certain listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and works of art. Where care is taken, its careful application is still a valid choice, especially for the protection of C18 and C19 joinery and the conservation of important historic interiors. However, those responsible for the fabric of places of worship do need to be aware of the risks that arise from the inappropriate sanding down or removal of lead paint during redecoration, as older painted surfaces may include many layers of lead paint.

Things to do...

- Consider whether your building might have surface finishes containing lead paint. Old lead paint frequently has a creamy or soft colour and rather than splitting and peeling, it may develop a fine, rectangular pattern of cracking. The presence of lead paint can be confirmed with a DIY test kit or by professional analysis.
- If you think that lead paint may be present, consider how to approach any necessary redecoration. It may be safer to renew or overcoat lead paint than to attempt its removal. Seek advice from your professional adviser if necessary.
- Ensure that any volunteers, craftspeople or professionals undertaking the removal of lead paint have carried out a thorough risk assessment and put in place appropriate safety measures.
- Be aware that children are particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning.

Further information

Further information about lead paint can be found in [SPAB Technical Q&A 30: Lead Paint](#) on the **SPAB** website.

The **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** has a new section on its website devoted to advice about [lead safety](#).

DEFRA publishes guidance on [lead paint in older buildings](#) on its website.

The **British Coating Federation (BCF)** offers advice on dealing with old lead painted surfaces in its [booklet](#).

The **Lead Paint Safety Association** offers advice on testing for lead on its [website](#).

Need more help?

If you have any questions about maintenance or repair issues contact our [Technical Helpline](#) for advice and guidance. This service is normally available on **Fridays** between **9.30am and 3.30pm** on **0207 456 0916**. Alternatively you can mail your questions to advice@spabfm.org.uk. Copies of the SPAB's range of Technical Pamphlets and Information Sheets are available to purchase from our [online bookshop](#).

We hope that you have found this email bulletin useful. If you have any comments or suggestions on how we may improve this service please do get in touch with us using info@spabfm.org.uk.

Sara Crofts Faith in Maintenance Project Director

Stave off decay by daily care ~ William Morris 1877

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