

Lead-safety for today's telecommunications workers.

1. If your supervisor tells you that handling lead-covered cable and lead solder (or working shoulder-to-shoulder with someone who is) is not hazardous, DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT! Dirt, dust, and tarnish on the surface of lead-covered cable contain high levels of lead oxide. Lead oxide is just as poisonous as lead. The same goes for dirt, dust, and tarnish on the surface of lead solder.
2. If you are handling lead in an enclosed space then ongoing air sampling for lead levels and good ventilation at all times are absolute requirements.
3. If you are handling lead DO NOT WEAR HOME THE SAME CLOTHES THAT YOU WORKED IN. THIS INCLUDES SHOES AND SOCKS. Getting lead residue on clothing, on the skin, and in the hair, is often unavoidable. In the absence of company-provided-and-maintained work clothing, disposable jump suits should be worn and disposed of at the work site. DO NOT BRING HOME WORK CLOTHING FOR LAUNDERING, STORAGE, OR SAFEKEEPING.
4. Wear work gloves whenever possible. Do not smoke, eat, or engage in any type of hand-to-mouth activity while working around lead without first washing your hands. Potable hot water and hand soap must be close at hand at all times even when working in the field. Wash your hands whenever they are visibly dirty. Clean under your fingernails at the end of each day.
5. If company-provided showers are not available then when you get home head straight for the shower even before greeting family and friends; SHOWER AND SHAMPOO FIRST!
6. Insist that the amount of lead in your blood be documented before you begin working around lead and then regularly (weekly or monthly) while lead exposure is going on.
7. Do not dry dust any surface. Vacuum instead using approved equipment.
8. When in doubt about the amount of lead dust in the air wear a respirator.