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MEMORANDUM TO: J. L. Kimberley
Lead Industries Association, Inc.

DATE: December 6, 1971

SUBJECT: Lead and Ceramics

COPIES: Jerome Smith
Jerome Cole ✓

Enclosed is a draft article for one of the national newspaper syndicates on lead and ceramics. The article was stimulated by the Wall Street Journal story and Mr. Smith's presentation at the lead seminar.

Please feel free to make any comments or changes you desire and then Ben Schecter of our office will get back to the editor.

Robert A. Rogers

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Enc.

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New York -- The housewife with a flair for needlepoint, the teenager with a yen to create mod leather belts and the retired executive who wants to work with his "hands", have helped propel the hobby and crafts industry within a hop, skip and jump of a billion dollar a year business.

The tremendous growth of this industry, which has been described as depression-proof, was sparked by such firms as Westinghouse, General Electric and Raytheon that added hobby kits to their list of consumer lines to meet the accelerated demand for such items.

Perhaps one of the fastest growing items in the handicraft area today is home-made pottery. The American Crafts Council, which calls ceramics the most popular craft, said the number of amateur potters is growing rapidly.

Latest figures show that there are 462 recognized pottery courses being taught in the U.S. and that's twice the number of five years ago. How many courses are taught by unlicensed individuals or schools are unknown but it could be significant.

Authorities said this rapid growth where an individual can make pottery at home for an investment of \$200 or less has created a major problem. The problem is that they sell their finished products without licensing and inspection and without adequate training in the lethal possibilities of toxic glazes.

They said that unless you know precisely how a piece of crockery is made or have gone to the trouble and expense of getting it analyzed by a laboratory, the toxic materials in the glaze could be fatal. Glazes are the glass-like coatings fused at high heat to earthenware surfaces. They typically contain significant amounts of lead or other heavy materials that add color and speed the fusion process.

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where?
Jerome F. Smith, manager of the Technical Services of the Lead Industries Association said there are few items in the American household today that are used as consistently -- and with such complete safety -- as the ceramic dinnerware used by nearly 200 million Americans.

Nevertheless, over the years, there have been several isolated cases of lead poisoning reported, due to protracted and somewhat atypical use of poorly glazed ceramic items.

Most often, these cases have resulted from the use of folk crafted and imported ceramic utensils, usually pitchers or mugs, which were employed to store highly acid foods or beverages. The first such instance of lead poisoning from use of ceramic utensils came to the attention of the lead industry approximately 11 years ago. This marked the beginning of an extensive, systematic research and control effort not only to eliminate the potential problem of lead release, but also to regulate the release of other heavy metals from glazes as well.

"We believe this problem was not, and is not, widespread," he said. "In the last decade, we have learned of only a few such cases. And, when one considers the billions of pieces of glazed dinnerware in use today, we much be impressed by the rarity of the problem. But rare or not, we are determined to do all we can to eliminate it."

And this they have done through a manual, entitled "Facts About Lead Glazes for Art Potters and Hobbyists." Smith said this manual provides information which will assist the art potter and hobbyists in producing a safe finished product -- particularly as related to glazed ceramic items intended for food and beverage use.

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The work, based on the results of ten years of research, explains that glazes consist of ingredients often containing lead which melt together and become a glass at high temperatures. However, unless the glaze is properly formulated, handled, applied and fired, it can be dangerous not only to the potter but also to the ultimate user.

To avoid this, the Lead Industries Association manual emphasizes three recommendations:

1. Design and fire purely decorative pieces only, or
2. Use only highly acid resistant glazes for food and beverage contact surfaces, and fire properly, or
3. Use leadless glazes for food and beverage surfaces, being sure the potter's equipment is capable of firing such glazes.

"There is no element," states the booklet, "that will, alone, or in combination - impart all of the desirable properties to a glaze as well as lead -- and do so with reasonable economy and complete safety when properly handled. When correctly formulated, applied and fired, lead fluxed glazes are among the safest and most acid resistant of all.

2 (A copy of the manual is available by writing to the Environmental Health Department, Lead Industries Association, 292 Madison Avenue, New York, New York, 10017.

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