

City Drafting Law to Control Lead Poison

By ORRIN EVANS
Of The Bulletin Staff

A law to control lead poisoning in Philadelphia has been prepared by four physicians, all members of the Board of Health.

It will be submitted to City Council after approval by the city solicitor's office, Dr. Norman R. Ingraham, health commissioner, said yesterday.

The committee of physicians was appointed to draw up the proposed legislation after the city solicitor's office ruled that the Board of Health had no authority at present to combat lead poisoning effectively.

76 Deaths

Since 1950, Dr. Ingraham pointed out, there have been 804 cases of lead poisoning in children, and 76 deaths.

Dr. John P. Hubbard, veteran member of the Board of Health; Dr. LeRoy A. Brothert, Dr. George Shucker, and Dr. Ingraham as an ex-official member of the committee, drew up the proposed regulations.

Commissioner Richard H. Buford, of the Department of Licenses and Inspections, favors an ordinance with teeth in it.

"There is no doubt that poisoning is a real problem," Buford said. "Anything that can be done to eliminate it is highly desirable, and the proposed legislation should help."

Ignore Recommendation

In reporting the result of research by the committee he headed, Dr. Hubbard said that in old houses where lead poisoning had occurred there had been no compliance in 57 percent of the cases where it had been recommended that hazardous paint be removed.

Salvatore Miano, chief of the accident prevention section in the division of environmental health, emphasized how badly needed control regulations are.

"Philadelphia," he said, "is one of the largest cities without regulations."

Proposed Rules

The proposed regulations include and require:

1—Investigation of any place where lead exists or from which lead may reasonably be expected to emanate in such a form that it can be introduced into the body.

2—Control of the handling, distribution, sale or use or continued presence of paint containing lead in excess of an approved amount.

3—Control of the handling, distribution, sale or use of children's furniture covered with a paint or any other decorative or protective covering or trim containing lead in excess of an approved amount (1 percent of total weight of solids).

4—Control of handling, distribution, sale or use of objects containing lead which are used or intended to be used for the storage, preparation or serving of food or drink.

5—Control of other sources or substances found to contain hazardous quantities of lead.

Also, it is proposed that all

Lead Poisoning in Children Reported on Rise in Phila.

By STUART BROWN
Of The Bulletin Staff

Not long ago, a 23-month-old Germantown girl became pale and irritable.

Her parents took her to their pediatrician, who suspected the girl was anemic.

"She was sent to a hospital. Laboratory studies of the girl's blood indicated a low level of hemoglobin, or red blood-cell pigment. This tended to confirm the diagnosis of anemia.

At the hospital, however, the girl's father mentioned that she had had a craving to eat inedible objects, a condition known to doctors as pica.

Faint Caused Illment

More blood samples were taken, and they pointed to the girl's true ailment—excessive lead in the blood, or lead poisoning.

While the girl underwent a long treatment to save her from death or possible mental retardation, the city's Health Department looked into her case.

An investigator from the department's accident control section found that the girl liked to pick paper off walls in her

home and eat the paper. She also ate woodwork in her parents' bedroom, the investigator found.

The paint covering the woodwork contained the lead that slowly was poisoning her, he reported.

Two Lessons Learned

Telling this story, Emil A. Tiboni, chief of accident control for the Health Department, said it illustrates two lessons:

—That lead poisoning is an insidious disease, which can affect the best supervised of small children.

—That parents should be constantly on the alert to keep harmful substances away from their children.

The Germantown girl recovered, but others in Philadelphia have been less fortunate.

Nineteen children, mostly between one and three years old, died of lead poisoning here last year and the year before, Tiboni said. They were among 353 cases of childhood lead poisoning in the city.

44 Cases Reported

So far this year, Tiboni said, there have been 44 cases, with no fatalities.

He said, however, that for some unknown reason the number of lead poisoning cases rises sharply during the warmer months. About three-fourths of the cases occur between May and October.

Some two-thirds of lead poisoning cases, Tiboni added, occur in homes with unsafe paint. Usually involved, he said, is outdoor paint containing lead which is used indoors.

Children may munch on window sills, cribs that have been repainted, floors or other objects. The lead builds up in the blood system until it reaches a poisonous level. The process may take months before symptoms appear.

The Health Department has issued a free pamphlet listing lead-poisoning symptoms and methods of prevention. Entitled "Is Your Child Being Slowly Poisoned?" it is available from the department's Community Health Services, 500 S. Broad st.

containers or paint containing lead shall be labeled as follows:

"Warning. Contains Lead. Harmful, if eaten. Do not apply on interior surface of a dwelling or a place used for care of children, or on window sills, toys, cribs and other furniture which may be chewed by children. Keep out of reach of children."