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Who Is Replacing Lead-Painted Garage Doors?

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D&AS EXCLUSIVE

Who Is Replacing Lead-Painted Garage Doors? Shocking Results from a New D&AS Survey

By Tom Wadsworth, Editor

"Most lead-painted garage doors are being replaced by installers who do not follow or charge for lead-safe practices."

A remarkable 88 percent of garage door dealers agree with that statement, according to a new Door & Access Systems national survey of garage door dealers.

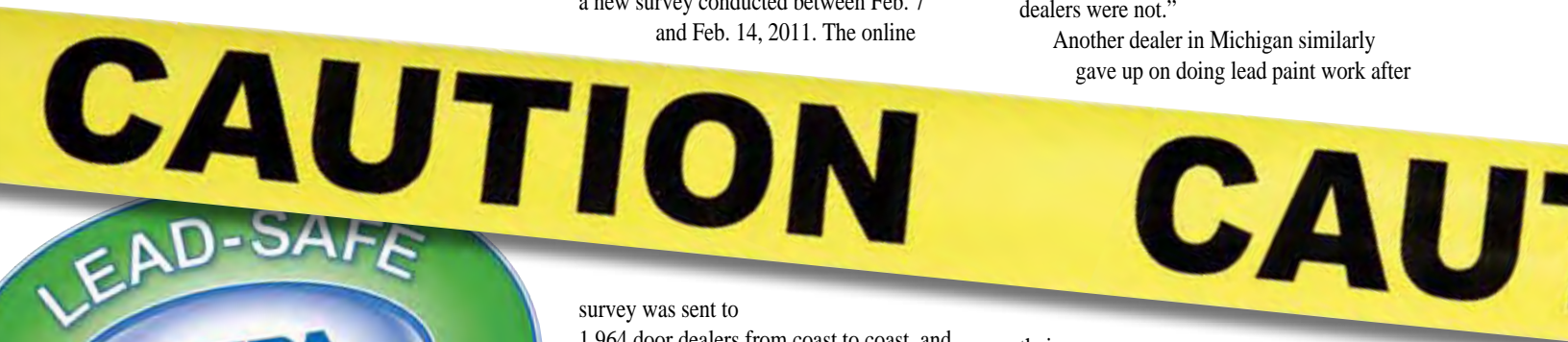
That's just one of several findings of a new survey conducted between Feb. 7 and Feb. 14, 2011. The online

Some Have Given Up

Any way you look at it, dealers are reporting that a massive number of lead-painted garage doors are being replaced by installers who are not following the mandated EPA practices.

One Michigan dealer admitted, "We started out following guidelines closely and then stopped when we heard other local dealers were not."

Another dealer in Michigan similarly gave up on doing lead paint work after



survey was sent to 1,964 door dealers from coast to coast, and 248 responded.

Rampant Disregard of EPA Rules

Take note. The survey didn't indicate that 88 percent of dealers *admitted* to ignoring lead-safe practices. Rather, 88 percent of dealers *guessed* that "most lead-painted garage doors are being replaced by installers who do not follow or charge for lead-safe practices." This statement was one of three options for survey respondents to select.

Another eight percent checked the box that said: "Most of these garage doors are NOT being replaced. Because of the additional cost, homeowners are electing not to replace them."

Only four percent selected: "Most of these garage doors are being replaced by EPA-certified installers who charge for lead-safe practices."

their one certified renovator left the company. Their explanation: "It is too costly (when there are) too many 'men in a truck' contractors out of work, performing jobs at cost."

How Much Do You Charge?

With the costs of lead-safe work being such a major influence on dealer practices, we wanted to know how much dealers are charging for replacing a 16' x 7' garage door.

Last year, in our April 2010 survey, 55 percent of dealers said they hadn't yet determined that amount. But in our February 2011 survey, a large majority of dealers had figured out their fee structure for lead-safe work.

More than a third (36%) said they "don't do lead paint work." The other 64 percent checked a number between \$0 and \$700

(offered in \$50 increments). The amount of their charges varied widely, from \$0 to \$700+. No specific fee was common.

The number checked most often was \$0. Of those who do lead paint work, 23 percent said they do it for no charge. But the most common charge was between \$100 and \$250 (42% selected one of these four amounts).

The Insurance Juggernaut

One Wisconsin dealer who charges \$150 extra for lead-safe practices did some close assessment of the costs involved. "A year-end review shows our actual expenses on a lead removal to be approximately \$260 when including additional labor, brochures, materials, and pro-rated training and insurance."

This dealer had paid \$1,700 for a special lead insurance policy. "Bottom line, this was a loss for us, but we can't justify charging \$250 to \$300 when competitors aren't."

A Louisiana dealer who is not doing lead-safe work said, "I have researched the cost of insurance, and if I only do one job a year, a \$700 fee is not high enough."

"Way Too Risky"

Even though most dealers have gone through the certification and training process, many have elected to decline any jobs that involve lead paint.

Are Door Dealers Getting Certified?

"We are a certified firm, and we have at least one employee who is a certified renovator."

19.5% April 2010

64% February 2011

"We have not obtained any (lead paint) certification, and we have no plans to get certified."

19.7% April 2010

18.9% February 2011

Total respondents to this question: 238

"We are certified but not doing any lead paint work," said a Colorado dealer. "(It's) way too risky and costly."

A Georgia dealer added that lead-safe work simply "isn't cost effective from an insurance and liability standpoint." He added that, "Homeowners and remodelers don't care if lead is present. They just want it as cheap as possible."

Will Homeowners Pay?

"When we mention the lead paint rule," said a dealer from North Carolina, "our customers are surprised and many times opt not to do the job. They simply will not pay extra for all the hassle."

Several dealers from different states (e.g., Kansas, Connecticut, Missouri, West Virginia, and Oregon) stated that homeowners are removing the garage doors themselves. So, in spite of the injury hazards of DIY door removal and the health hazards of lead dust exposure, some homeowners are taking the cheap way out.

Few Do Lead-Safe Work

Our survey asked dealers, "Think of all the residential garage doors you replaced in the last six months. For what percentage of these doors did you engage in the EPA's lead-safe practices?"

The results revealed that 66 percent of dealers have not replaced a single lead-painted garage door. Another 20 percent said they used lead-safe practices on five percent of all residential doors replaced.

How Are Lead-Painted Garage Doors Being Replaced?

According to your best guess, how are MOST lead-painted garage doors currently being replaced in your area?

Most of these garage doors are NOT being replaced. Because of the additional cost, homeowners are electing not to replace them.

8.0%

Most of these garage doors are being replaced by installers who don't follow (or charge for) lead-safe practices.

88.1%

Most of these garage doors are being replaced by EPA-certified installers who charge for lead-safe practices.

4.0%

Total respondents to this question: 201

More than half (54%) of the dealers who have performed no lead-safe work were EPA-certified dealers.

Certified, But Not Using It

"Every customer who has had a pre-1978 home has showed us the door," responded an EPA-certified Arizona dealer. "Some were polite, some were irate, but not one of them even let us test to see if lead paint was present."

Another EPA-certified Illinois dealer said, "About one percent (of doors) required the Act. However, we did not do the job because the

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price was less from our competitors who are not certified and ignore the Act.”

An EPA-certified New Mexico dealer reported, “I have tested approximately 20 doors for lead. Maybe five tested positive. We have decided not to do doors that test positive.”

Sometimes no lead-safe work is being done because dealers haven’t found any lead-painted doors. As one EPA-certified New York dealer said, “We have not found a door that we tested positive yet.”

Most Dealers Are Certified

In our April 2010 survey, 20 percent said they are a certified firm and have a certified renovator. In our February 2011 survey, that percentage jumped to 64 percent, while another 17 percent said they were working toward the certified firm/certified renovator status.

But one-fifth of all dealers still have no plans to get certified. In 2010, 20 percent of dealers said they have no plans to get certified. In 2011, that percentage remained almost unchanged at 19 percent.

The Professional Approach

The survey results generally provided a bleak picture of frustrated dealers and few lead-painted doors being properly handled. Yet, a few dealers indicated that they are experiencing some success with lead-safe business practices.

A New York dealer said, “Knowing we sell to independent contractors also, we sponsored 140 renovator classes to keep our customer base secure and for good will.”

“It worked,” he added, “and it identified the determined non-compliant companies in our area. Being committed to compliance has helped solidify our local market branded position.”

Remember: \$37,500 Fine

Dealers who are tempted to ignore lead-safe practices should remember what the EPA can do to violators. In addition to issuing penalties of up to \$37,500 per violation per day, the EPA can also seek “jail time for a firm that knowingly and willfully violates the (RRP Rule) requirements.” ■

HUD Grants \$115 Million for Lead Paint Hazards

Are customers reluctant to pay for lead-safe work? The government may be able to help.

In January, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded nearly \$115 million in grants to 40 local projects in 22 states for various projects related to lead-based paint. The funding is targeted to lead paint hazards in privately owned, low-income housing units.

HUD says the funding will clean up lead hazards in more than 11,000 homes and train workers in lead-safe methods.

Of the \$115 million, \$66.6 million is devoted to the “Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Grant Program” and \$48 million goes to the “Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration Grant Program.” Most grants range between \$2 million and \$4 million.

To see if your area has received funding, check the chart below.

State	Grantee
California	Los Angeles San Diego
Colorado	Denver
Connecticut	Bridgeport Hartford
Georgia	Atlanta Georgia Dept. of Community Health
Illinois	St. Clair County
Iowa	Dubuque
Kansas	Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment
Massachusetts	Brockton Lawrence Somerville
Michigan	Saginaw County
Minnesota	Duluth Minnesota Dept. of Health
Missouri	St. Louis County
Nebraska	Omaha
New Hampshire	Manchester
New Jersey	Newark
New York	Broome County Health Dept. Westchester County New York City Onondaga County Schenectady Syracuse
North Carolina	Greensboro State of North Carolina
Ohio	Cincinnati Cuyahoga County Board of Health Erie County Lorain Mahoning County Ohio Health Dept.
Pennsylvania	Harrisburg
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation
Tennessee	Tennessee Dept. of Environment and Conservation
Vermont	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Health Dept. Sheboygan

To contact the person responsible for the local projects, see the project summaries at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=fy2010projectdescriptions.pdf>

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*National average in mid-range projects category. Based on National Association of Realtors members included in Cost vs. Value study rather than actual sales data.