

Presentation in support of SB 705 – hazardous materials in housing demolitions
Senate Committee on Health Care

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I am representing United Neighborhoods for Reform (UNR) in support of SB705

My journey to sitting in this chair today began last summer while I was with a group of concerned citizens working with the Portland Bureau of Development Services to address shortcomings in house demolition notifications and waiting periods. During a meeting I had opportunity to ask the group (made up of city bureau employees, developers and other neighbors) “Who does the mother of young children living next to a demolition site call to make sure it’s safe for her kids to go out and play?” A long period of silence followed and I quietly voiced what many were thinking, “ This is a problem.”

That incident prompted myself and others to research the existing guidelines for controlling hazardous materials during housing demolitions; and to our surprise and disappointment , we found an ineffective patchwork of regulations and suggestions spread among EPA, OHA, DEQ, OSHA and Oregon CCB.

In the past 3 years, the city of Portland has approved over 750 residential demolition permits. Since most of these houses were built prior to 1950, there is no doubt that asbestos and lead based paint existed at majority of these sites. The health hazards of asbestos and lead based paint are well publicized and widely accepted and I don’t feel I need to detail these risks to members of this Committee -- other then to remind all that the EPA and CDC have both stated that there are *no* acceptable or safe levels of either asbestos or lead. And remember, when someone is exposed to asbestos and lead contaminated dust; they can’t be taken away to fresh air to recover; they can’t take a trip to ER for shot of adrenalin to counter the impact - they are potentially sentenced to serious, irreversibly health problems whose symptoms may not appear for years. Therefore, as this demolition activity increases, your urgent and immediate action is required to implement responsible demolition procedures.

While bill SB705 charges the OHA to study the public health impacts of both asbestos and lead during house demolition activities; I submit there are existing scientific studies already proving potential serious impact.

A HUD sponsored study by the UIC to gather data during housing demolitions in Chicago resulted in these three key findings:

- 1) Significant amounts of lead dust are emitted by demolition of older homes, often in excess of established thresholds.
- 2) Improvement of dust suppression techniques is needed to minimize the spread of this lead dust.
- 3) Lead dust fall was detected at distances 300 feet from demolition perimeter. (A later computer modeling program developed by Wayne State University for the city of Detroit puts this potential impact at even a greater distance.)

While the EPA and it’s state designate, Oregon Health Authority (OHA), have broad and detailed procedures for lead-based paint in the Renovations, Repairs and Painting Program (RRP); they are *silent* on whole house demolitions. When you consider the minimum threshold for activating the procedures during renovation is disturbing just 6 sq-ft of lead based material, it’s clear that current whole house demolitions are in dire need of a similar set of guidelines and inspection.

The HUD study mentioned above was born from the earlier “East Baltimore/ Responsible Demolition” study.

While there are many broad recommendations from the East Baltimore case study regarding responsible demolition; a few simple and practical ones drastically reduce the public’s risk.

- 1) Perform partial deconstruction of homes: removing doors, windows, railings and other components with high amounts of lead *prior* to demolition. Obviously, full abatement of asbestos containing materials must also be completed prior to actual demolition activities. Documented evidence of abatement by certified contractors should be a prerequisite before demolition permits are issued.
- 2) Provide adequate wetting of the structure and debris to minimize dust spread.
- 3) Daily clean-up site, especially sidewalks to minimize spread of generated dust.
- 3) Clearly communicate these efforts to nearby neighbors, as well as provide tacky mats during - and HEPA vacuum cleaning services directly after-- demolition activities.

For the above reasons, it is urgent that SB 705 be actively supported and even expanded to provide minimal guidelines for responsible, effective single house demolitions that adequately reduce the risk to public health.

For it is my desire that each Committee member would be able to answer unequivocally, “Yes” – to that mother living adjacent to a recent house demolition, when she asks – “Is it safe for my children to go out and play?”

Thank you

Reference material links:

HUD study by UIC

<http://www.nchh.org/Research/ArchivedResearchProjects/LeadDustandHousingDemolition.aspx>

East Baltimore – Responsible Demolition study

<http://www.aecf.org/resources/responsible-demolition-a-baltimore-case-study-with-national-implications/>

EPA - Renovation, Repair and Painting Program (RRP)

<http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/sbcomplianceguide.pdf>

Other research sources:

Wayne State University, Lead and Demolition paper

<http://detroitgreenandhealthyhomes.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Leaddemocombined011614.pdf>

Discussions of wet misting technologies:

<http://www.dustboss.com/support/dust-related-health-safety-issues/demolition-dust-hazards-and-control/>

<http://www.buffaloturbine.com/monsoon-demolition.html>