

**Presentation in support of SB 705 A – hazardous materials in housing demolitions**  
**House Committee on Health Care**

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My name is John Sandie, I live at 3425 NE Fremont St., Portland, OR 97212.  
I am representing United Neighborhoods for Reform (UNR) in support of SB705 A

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 with little to no true oversight occurring.

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 nor safe levels of either asbestos or lead. Therefore, as this demolition activity increases, your urgent and immediate action is required to implement responsible demolition procedures to protect citizens within the high risk area.

Data recently received from the DEQ office detailing residential asbestos abatements performed in city of Portland over the last few years was compared with actual whole house demolitions/ major renovations in 8 inner NE neighborhoods most affected by the raising level of single family housing demolitions. This comparison showed DEQ documented abatements occurred in only roughly 5 % of the house demolitions/renovations. Additionally, data provided by OHA showed a total of only 29 documented lead based paint abatements have been performed in the entire state of Oregon in the last four years. Both of these findings underscore the need for certified proof that proper actions are taking place prior to any demolition or major renovation work is undertaken.

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); these rules have not been interpreted to apply to whole house demolitions. When you consider the minimum threshold for activating the procedures during interior renovation is disturbing just 6 sq-ft of lead based material, it’s clear that current whole house mechanical demolitions are in dire need of a similar set of guidelines and verification.

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) Provide adequate wetting of the structure and debris to minimize dust spread; with daily cleanup ( especially sidewalks) to minimize spread of generated dust.
- 2) Clearly communicate these efforts to nearby neighbors, as well as provide threshold tacky mats during - and HEPA vacuum cleaning services directly after-- demolition activities.
- 3) 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 per regulations. However, based on the lack of documented abatements being performed in the Portland data, I submit that documented evidence of abatement plans for both asbestos and lead by certified contractors should be a prerequisite before any demolition permits are issued. In fact, from both public health and reuse/repurpose viewpoints – effective, documented abatement coordinated with full house deconstruction would best serve the public interest on numerous fronts.

While bill SB705 A is limited and only a small step in right direction; I'm in hope that it will serve a broader purpose and highlight the need to do so much more to properly protect the public health during single family residence demolitions in urban environments.

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

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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>