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UNLEADED: MONTANA'S SILENT EPIDEMIC

By

ERICA MARIE ZUREK

B.A., Education, City University of Seattle, Seattle, WA
B.A., Anthropology, University of Minnesota, Duluth, MN

Professional Paper

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts
Environmental Science and Natural Resource Journalism

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

May 2022

Approved by:

Scott Whittenburg, Dean of The Graduate School
Graduate School

Jule Banville, Chair
Journalism

Joe Eaton
Journalism

Curtis Noonan
Public Health

Corin Cates-Carney
Montana Public Radio

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Zurek, Erica, M.A., Environmental Science and Natural Resource Journalism, May 2022

Unleaded: Montana's Silent Epidemic

Chairperson: Jule Banville

Lead is a cumulative toxin that can affect multiple systems in the human body. Exposure occurs through various sources, such as outdated and deteriorating infrastructure, paint, soil and drinking water. This project, a three-part audio series on lead exposure in Montana highlights various paths of exposure and how young children under age six years of age are particularly vulnerable. Part one is a story about a new state requirement to test all k-12 schools for lead in water fixtures. Part two: A house remodel exposes a family's children to lead. Getting a diagnosis wasn't easy. Part three: A look at how Montanans have experienced decades of exposure to toxic lead and what the state and one local health department is doing about it.

These three pieces are audio stories, transcribed here in full. They were aired and published on Montana Public Radio.

Unleaded: Montana's Silent Epidemic - Part 1

<<Host Lede>> In Montana, there's a new state requirement to test all k-12 schools for lead in water fixtures. Outdated and deteriorating plumbing infrastructure is a primary source of lead exposure and young children under six years of age are particularly vulnerable. In part one of our three-part series on lead exposure in Montana, Erica Zurek reports on the amount of lead Montana schools are finding in their water.

<<Host Outro>> Next in our three-part series on lead exposure in Montana, a house remodel exposes a family's children to lead. Getting a diagnosis wasn't easy. Listen tomorrow at TK to hear part two.

Runs: 7:44

<<Nats>> Sounds of children playing outside at Warren Elementary School.

<<Zurek>> It's recess time at Warren Elementary School. Kids are running around and climbing on playground equipment with jackets unzipped on a warm February afternoon in Helena, Montana.

<<Nats>> Playground sounds and walking into the school.

<<Zurek>> Just inside, colorful coats hang on hooks in a long hallway. On a small chalkboard the words "be kind" are written in bright letters.

<<Nats>> School sounds

<<Zurek>> The Warren School is one of the 590 K-12 schools in Montana required - for the first time - to test for lead in all water fountains and sinks used for drinking or food preparation. A state rule that took effect in January 2020 gave schools a deadline: December 31, 2021.

As of April 21st, 2022 more than half have completed testing. The Warren School is one that has.

<<Zurek>> Neal Murray, the safety and operations manager for the Helena School District started collecting water samples during summer break in 2021.

<<Murray>> Tackling something like this is important, because I think that as a school district, our primary focus has to be the safety of the children and our staff. (008)

<<Zurek>> He immediately found lead in water at the school and Helena Public Schools notified parents and staff.

<<Murray>> We know that our primary issues are with plumbing within the building. (006)

<<Zurek>> It's well established that lead is toxic, and ONE of the ways children are exposed is through drinking water piped through corroded plumbing in schools. Being odorless and colorless, you can't see lead, taste it or smell it. But cumulative exposure affects kids' nervous systems and brains, sometimes leading to learning difficulties, poor attention, decreased memory and behavior issues.

People often refer to parts per billion, or ppb, when describing the amount of contaminants in drinking water or soil.

A concentration of 1 part per billion is equivalent to about one drop of water in a small hotel swimming pool. So, not very much.

The federal government – specifically the Environmental Protection Agency – requires action if the lead concentration in a drinking water sample is found to be 15 parts per billion or higher.

<<Montgomery>> The level is not necessarily health based. It was developed back in the early 90s for a variety of reasons. (007)

<<Zurek>> Greg Montgomery manages the school lead program at the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The DEQ partners with Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services to carry out the school testing requirement.

<<Montgomery>> The Montana program uses a five parts per billion number for an action level for the school program. That's not health based, either, because a health-based number for lead is zero. But that's basically as low as most labs can accurately measure lead with any kind of degree of certainty. (017)

<<Zurek>> [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends lead in drinking water not exceed 1 part per billion while [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) say there's no safe level of lead in children's blood.

More than [11,000 fixtures](#) have been tested so far in Montana schools. Just over a quarter of them were over the allowable state limit of five parts per billion. And about eight percent of them – 865 drinking fountains and faucets – were over 15 parts per billion.

Missoula County Public Schools [sampled fixtures](#) in all of its buildings and the district decided to shut down all fixtures that tested over 5 ppb, which was about a fourth of all the fixtures providing drinking water.

<<Montgomery>> Schools are required to remediate anything over five parts per billion. If they get results between five and 15 parts per billion, they can routinely flush it for a

little bit to flush the stagnant water out where the lead tends to accumulate. And they can do that until they come up with a permanent remedy. (018)

<<Zurek>> If concentrations are greater than 15 parts per billion, schools are required to shut off the fixture immediately until they can figure out how to get the level down. Some of the fixtures that tested way above the threshold were in places like custodian's closets, where students won't use them. Others were not, like a drinking fountain at Havre's Highland Park School, which tested at 224 parts per billion. At Philipsburg's 7-12 School, a classroom sink had 3,660 parts per billion.

But why does all of this really matter?

[Dr. Mona Hana-Attisha](#) is a pediatrician and professor with Michigan State University. Her research exposed the [Flint water crisis](#). And she says the science is clear.

<<Hana-Attisha>> There's no safe level of lead, and we know that we have to focus on prevention. We shouldn't even think about like, well, how much is okay. Well, none's okay. (008)

<<Zurek>> Children younger than six are especially vulnerable to lead exposure. And even low levels of exposure can cause irreversible harm and long-term effects. The [World Health Organization](#) says young children absorb four to five times as much ingested lead as adults exposed to the same source.

<<Hana-Attisha>> It is a poison, it attacks our nervous system, it attacks developing brains, like it lowers IQ levels, impacts behavior, it's been linked to all kinds of things, but we can prevent it. And it's really easy to prevent, and we know how to prevent it. And we just have to have the political will, and the dollars to do that. (031)

<<Zurek>> Montana schools are now required every three to five years to collect water samples. Lead samples in water are pretty easy to collect, but...

<<Hana-Attisha>> Testing is really nuanced. (002)

<<Zurek>> You can test the same fixture ten different times and get ten different results.

<<Hana-Attisha>> So that makes sampling complicated. And even with testing, you're not guaranteeing that what comes out of the tap is safe. It potentially can provide false reassurance that the water is safe when it's not. So, when it comes to lead in water, when it comes to lead in schools and water, the goal is to make sure that we've found the lead in the delivery system and put into place precautions to restrict the release of lead. (024)

<<Zurek>> Eliminating all lead by replacing plumbing is expensive, complicated and takes time. The DEQ has funding through an EPA grant for schools, but that can only be used for sampling. Potential sources of funding for remediation include the state's revolving fund and loan program, flexible levies run by the schools, low-interest loans

and money from the federal infrastructure bill that passed in 2021. But for now, school districts have to pay for it themselves from existing budgets.

<<Hana-Attisha>> But in the meantime, installing these lead-clearing filtration hydration stations that are high volume, have high flow, that are well maintained to allow kids safe access to drinking water. (010)

<<Nats>> water from the faucet

<<Zurek>> And that's exactly what Neal Murray did at the Warren School. About 60 water faucets were replaced. All the fixtures now have filters and the school installed filtering water bottle filler stations - like the ones in airports.

<<Murray>> So they have multiple sources of safe drinking water. Kids do spend a lot of time in the schools but the other part of that is they spend a lot of time at home. (009)

<<Zurek>> That means even if a child's school does not have high lead levels, they might face other sources of exposure. A 2016 [study](#) conducted by Quest Diagnostics and Boston Children's Hospital shows [over half of U.S. children have detectable levels of lead in their blood](#).

<<Stacey>> There are sources of exposure of lead everywhere. (004)

<<Zurek>> Valerie Stacey's an environmental health specialist with Lewis and Clark Public Health in Helena.

<<Stacey>> This is something that's impacting someone's ability to do well in school or someone's ability to do well, just in life in general and relationships. Forever. That's huge. You know, that's huge. (012)

<<Zurek>> On April 20, 2022 Montana's American Rescue Plan Infrastructure Advisory Commission voted 7-2 against a proposal to allocate funds to remediate lead in schools. Even though the motion failed, the commission plans to revisit this topic at a future meeting. The DEQ continues reaching out to schools that have not yet sampled, encouraging them to do so. In Helena, Montana, I'm Erica Zurek.

Unleaded: Montana's Silent Epidemic - Part 2

<<Host Lede>> Lead paint in buildings is a major source of exposure in the United States, with walls, floors and even old furniture producing chips and fine lead dust. And small amounts of exposure to low levels of lead can cause health problems, especially in children. In the second of a three-part series on lead exposure in Montana, Erica Zurek reports on how lead impacted one Montana family.

<< Host Outro>> In part three of our series on lead exposure in Montana we'll look at how Montanans have experienced decades of exposure to toxic lead and what the state and one local health department is doing about it.

Runs: 8:58

<<Zurek>> Rosebud County in southeastern Montana is one of the state's most sparsely populated. Aubrienne and Casey Kluver live here, about 16 miles from Colstrip, with their four children – ranging in age from 10 months to 8 years. Their family owns and operates a multi-generational cattle ranch. Casey's also a fence-building contractor and pastor of a church. Aubrienne homeschools and handles marketing for their beef sales.

<<Nats>> walking on gravel and the sound of a door opening, kid sounds, children's show sounds

<<Zurek> Their home, built in 1915, sits tucked away 14-miles down a gravel road. Inside, the kitchen and dining area open into a cozy living room where the kids play with toys and hang upside down from fabric swings attached to the ceiling. Their eight-month-old daughter hiccups in her high chair and takes in the scene.

<<Casey>> This was my great grandfather's place. (002)

<<Zurek>> The Kluvers' two oldest - 8-year-old twins - were exposed daily to a minuscule amount of lead for the first 13 months of their lives. The source was paint from this house during a renovation.

<<Aubrienne>> The dust on the dog's feet. They dropped their toy, on an averagely clean floor, and they get lead poisoning. (010)

<<Zurek>> It doesn't take much lead to create a risk.

<<Casey>> They say like a [sugar packet could contaminate an entire gymnasium](#). (007)

<<Casey>> We found out and realized it was the house, we moved out. (005)

<<Zurek>> More than half [of Montana homes were built before 1980](#), and many of them were painted with lead-based paint before it was banned in 1978.

Home renovations are a culprit for lead exposure, but simply opening and closing lead-painted fixtures like windows and doors can also generate a hazard. And some babies and toddlers are drawn to eating paint chips because they taste sweet.

Casey's family home required intense renovation.

<<Aubrienne>> We had painstakingly taken each piece of trim off and labeled it like we're gonna keep it because we're in our 20s and we're ranchers and so we need to save every penny. (005)

<<Zurek>> They moved into the house two weeks before the twins were born.

<<Casey>> We got the house where you could live in it. (003)

<<Aubrienne>> They were just hard babies, and they were having a bunch of issues in their diapers, like mucousy stools and stuff like that. And I was like, I just feel like something's not right. (008)

<<Zurek>> They took the twins to three doctors before making an appointment with a pediatric specialist in Billings.

<<Aubrienne>> Their iron was so low, he's like, I also want to run a lead test. (003)

<<Zurek>> Low iron levels can indicate a problem with lead. Bone-building receptors in the body have a hard time differentiating between lead and actual nutrients like calcium and iron. So, the body fails to identify lead as foreign or toxic, absorbing it into bones and leaching it into the bloodstream.

<<Aubrienne>> And so that's when we found out that my daughter's was 11 and my son's was 14 and a half. (003)

<<Zurek>> Aubrienne's referring to how many micrograms of lead were in each deciliter of her children's blood. [There's no safe level](#), but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established a [limit](#) of three and a half micrograms per deciliter. So the Kluver twins had high levels. Lead exposure can lead to a host of health issues even at low levels, like nervous system and brain damage, lower IQ scores, hearing loss and difficulty concentrating.

<<Aubrienne>> That's when it kind of went from this internal, like, something's wrong my babies are fussy, this is really like arduous and hard to...we don't know what to do. (009)

<<Zurek>> Blood lead tests above the CDC's action level are reported to the county and state health departments. A county nurse followed up with the Klivers and told them they were the first documented local case in over a decade.

<<Aubrienne>> You're telling me we're the first case in Rosebud County in 13 years? Like you just haven't been testing anybody. (005)

<<Zurek>> [Eleven states](#) mandate blood lead tests for all children. Montana's not one of them. Medicaid requires that all enrolled children get tested for lead in their blood at 12 and 24 months, but [half of U.S children are not on Medicaid](#). This patchwork of policies creates concern that lead-exposed kids are being missed.

<<Zurek>> Dr. Patricia Notario, a pediatrician, works at the Billings Clinic.

<<Notario>> The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that every child at 12 months and at 24 months be evaluated at minimum with a set of screening questions to assess their degree of exposure. (017)

<<Zurek>> Developmentally, this is when kids are crawling and walking and exploring the world by putting everything in their mouths, so they're more susceptible to coming in contact with lead dust.

<<Notario>> But that also requires that their caregivers be aware of whether or not lead is something that they have in their home. (008)

<<Zurek>> A pediatrician might ask a caregiver screening questions: Has your child had frequent exposure to a home built before 1978 that's been in recent repair? Or has she had exposure to a person who has a job or hobby that involves working with lead? Do they have access to toys made in other countries with lead-based paint? And in Montana, do you hunt or fish with ammunition or tackle that contains lead?

Only if there's a positive answer to any of the screening questions is it recommended that kids have their blood tested. Sometimes the screening misses sources of potential exposure, as it did with the Kluvers. They thought the paint in their house had been dealt with, so the nurse checked no on the form.

<<Casey>> I had awareness that was probably lead paint outside. We never put the kids down outside. (006)

<<Zurek>> Awareness because the house was built in 1915. Lead paint doesn't look different from other paint except that when it degrades it creates a pattern that looks like alligator scales. Another sign is production of a chalky residue when it rubs off.

Casey took numerous steps to get lead paint and dust out of the house. He also removed all of the nearby topsoil. Eventually, the Kluvers moved back into their home.

<<Casey and Aubrienne>> So we spent our weekends wiping this house down, over and over again for months and months. (005)

<<Zurek>> It took several years to get the house to a manageable state. Over the course of a year, the twins' blood lead levels slowly dropped. At around three years old their tests came back negative. The Kluvers' next child born soon afterward never tested positive for lead.

<<Casey>> I would say easily, it's the biggest trial we've ever been through. I put hundreds of hours in restoring this house and I was like, alright, it's gonna be this safe, super fun big house for my kids to grow up in, you know. I did all this work to try and create this life for my kids and it was actually attacking them. (023)

<<Zurek>> Bruce Lanphear is a public health physician and professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada. His work focuses on early childhood health, environmental neurotoxins and lead poisoning.

<<Lanphear>> If I could help prevent childhood lead poisoning, maybe I could at least take away an obstacle that kept children from thriving in today's society. (009)

<<Zurek>> The U.S. Lead Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 inspired his first study on lead poisoning prevention...

<<Lanphear>> Which was to measure what levels of lead house dust are dangerous for kids. Because up until that point, we basically use children as biological indicators of substandard housing, actually, we still do, because these tools have not been deployed, even though we've had them for 25 years. (016)

<<Zurek>> Lead continued to be used in paint through most of the 1970s and wasn't fully banned from gasoline in the U.S. until the 1990s.

<<Lanphear>> Blood lead levels have come down by over 95% since the 1960s, 1970s and that seems like wow, what a drop, that's wonderful. But children's blood lead levels, our blood lead levels today are still 10 to 100 times higher than our pre-industrial ancestors. So by that standard, our lead exposure is still too high. (023)

There's been essentially a pandemic of lead poisoning. (003)

<<Zurek>> Lanphear remembers a colleague expressing concern about worrying parents unnecessarily.

<<Lanphear>> It would be ideal that our federal regulators and our health officials would take action and prevent lead poisoning before it ever happens so parents didn't need to know about it or do anything. But unfortunately that's not the reality we live in. (015)

<<Aubrienne>> We encountered people who diminished the actual risk, painters, doctors, friends, family. It was super emotionally taxing, not just failing your kids for lack of knowledge, but then also, like, other people dismissing your concerns. (019)

<<Zurek>> The Klivers have a mortgage-worth of improvements in their house and they couldn't just walk away. They had to find a way to live in their house while also protecting their kids.

<<Aubrienne>> You just love them with your whole heart and uh, if I had it to do again, I wish I knew how little it took to have exposure. We don't have any lasting scars that say, this is your fault and what you did to your kids, you know. But there might be hurdles that we didn't have to cross if there was no buckets of lead paint brought into our little oasis here, you know. (028)

<<Zurek>> In Rosebud County, Montana, I'm Erica Zurek.

Unleaded: Montana's Silent Epidemic - Part 3

<<Host Lede>> Lead contamination and exposure in Montana goes back several decades. But the data do not. Without more information, state and local health departments have no way of knowing how many people have been affected and the extent of the impact. In the third of our three-part series on lead exposure in Montana, Erica Zurek reports.

<<Host Outro>> This is the final story in a three-part series on lead in Montana. You can find all three stories on our website at mtptr.org.

Runs: 9:08

<<Zurek>> The city of Helena, Montana is well-acquainted with lead. The state capital and county seat of Lewis and Clark County is home to two Superfund sites.

<<Stacey>> Pretty much everything except that slag pile is what remains. (003)

<<Zurek>> Valerie Stacey, environmental health specialist with Lewis and Clark Public Health, is sitting in the driver's seat of her Chevy pickup, pointing to a 16-million-ton pile of slag, the byproduct of the former ASARCO lead smelter in East Helena. It opened in 1888 and ran until 2001.

<<Stacey>> So that's basically all of the discarded byproducts of the lead smelting operation. (004)

<<Zurek>> Helena's smelter was one of the world's largest lead processors in its day. In 1984 the federal government declared East Helena a Superfund site and it's why this city is ahead of some others when it comes to testing for lead exposure.

<<Stacey>> If that Superfund site didn't exist, we wouldn't have a lead program. (004)

<<Nats>> Truck door shutting, walking into the building and up the stairs.

<<Zurek>> The next stop is East Helena's City Hall. On the second floor is the former office of the original Lead Education and Abatement Program, – or LEAP – which was created in 1992. The room overflows with binders, maps, photographs and case investigations related to lead exposure in East Helena.

<<Stacey>> Yeah, I don't know if you've heard about the '81 flood, but probably one of the biggest floods that we've ever had here in this area. And so this is the interstate. Umm, this is the lead smelter site. (018)

<<Zurek>> Stacey is looking at a black and white aerial photograph.

<<Stacey>> They intentionally put those places adjacent to creeks because they powered their operations. (004)

<<Zurek>> East Helena experienced widespread contamination when the creek flooded.

<<Stacey>> 1981 was a very large event that transported a lot of contaminated soil throughout that entire floodplain, which as you can see, ran through a large part of town and far north. (013)

<<Zurek>> Kathy Moore is the environmental division administrator for Lewis and Clark Public Health. She's been with the department for 28 years and oversees the LEAP program.

<<Moore>> The CDC came to East Helena. They did blood lead screening in the community and what they found was that children in East Helena were elevated above the national average. (011)

<<Zurek>> Blood lead levels are the detectable levels of lead in blood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [value](#) for children, which has been adjusted over the years, is now three and a half micrograms per deciliter.

<<Moore>> And those levels of blood lead were significantly higher than the CDC health standards. (007)

<<Zurek>> Funding for the LEAP program is provided through a cooperative agreement with the EPA and can only be used within the Superfund area.

<<Moore>> So if we're working outside of that area, the health department out of their budget has to pay for the rest of it. So we don't have a budget, we literally don't have a program outside of East Helena. (010)

<<Zurek>> Despite these limitations, East Helena is in a better position than other communities in the state. Most local governments don't have a good way to pay for the remediation of lead even if they know people are getting exposed.

<<Moore>> What my understanding is of other programs in the state that are dealing with lead is that there really aren't any. Local government, county health departments typically reach out to DPHHS for some assistance. (012)

<<Zurek>> The last time they did a large community scale blood lead draw...

<<Moore>> All of our East Helena kids were below that national standard. So we did pretty well at that point. But what we were finding is that we were getting elevated levels from the rest of the county. (013)

<<Zurek>> Moore's team started recognizing that lead exposure was not just coming from the smelter. It was also coming from homes built before 1978, from plumbing, paint, dust, leaded glass, beloved clawfoot tubs, toys, and mine tailings.

<<Moore>> Now we're saying, wait a minute, you know, East Helena was a real serious issue. But have we overlooked everyone else? And to some extent we did. (013)

<<Zurek>> In the last five years, Moore's team started to address residential cases of elevated blood lead levels outside of the Superfund area and in nearby counties.

<<Moore>> So we said if you have an elevated blood lead, you can give us a call. We will come down, we'll do a residential home assessment and we'll try to determine what that source might be. And then we'll provide education to the family about how to protect their kiddos. (016)

<<Zurek>> Montana requires healthcare providers, labs and school administrators to report elevated blood lead levels to the local county health department or to the Department of Health and Human Services. But that information doesn't always flow in both directions.

<<Moore>> The state a few years ago changed the way they shared information with local government. We used to get a copy of every blood lead test that happened in our county, and the state decided that well, we're not going to do that anymore. We're only sending you the elevated ones. Now, if you're trying to figure out a percentage of how many of your kids are elevated and you don't have that denominator. Well, forget it, you can't. (027)

<<Zurek>> Unlike East Helena, with its lead smelter, other cities and towns in Montana have lacked funding and data to understand the full scope of lead exposure in the state.

<<Moore>> We can't really track our progress or the scope of the problem, because we don't look at the problem. We being our medical community, and the state of Montana, and local health departments. (014)

<<Zurek>> In a written response to an interview request, Jon Ebelt, public information officer for Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services says, quote, "DPHHS had a lead poisoning prevention program about a decade ago - in 2011-2012 - that was funded through a cooperative agreement with the CDC. With this funding, DPHHS conducted a field study, the results of which demonstrated that many children were not being screened during that time. Overall, we lack relevant data about the true landscape of lead exposure in MT."

<<Harmon>> It is really staggering to see that there is a lack of testing that has been going on looking at the data from previous years. (008)

<<Zurek>> Sarah Harmon's an environmental health specialist at DPHHS. She's part of their new Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program team.

In September of 2021, the state health department received a five-year grant from the CDC to evaluate the landscape of childhood lead exposure in Montana.

<<Harmon>> And prior to this grant, we have really had no program established within the state that's been designated solely for lead prevention work. So really, that's what our goal is with our program is to bring back that public attention, provide the support for local public health departments, pediatricians doctors, and just to handle this, for lack of a better word, crisis. (025)

<<Nats>> Sounds of Rosner's classroom at Columbia

<<Zurek>> David Rosner is an author and professor of public health and history at Columbia University in New York City. One of his books is titled, Lead Wars.

<<Rosner>> There's been a war going on about what the nature of lead poisoning is, who has a right to try to control it, what the industry's interests in maintaining its power is, and how to basically deal with a problem that this industry created by polluting this world by basically putting it everywhere. (017)

That's the situation we're in. And we're constantly trying to figure out ways of ameliorating local outbreaks. (006)

<<Zurek>> Across the United States in rural and urban environments the issue persists.

<<Rosner>> It's not just Montana. It's not just for Chicago, or Flint, or New York or anywhere else. We all have this common problem, which is that we don't have the resources to really take care of it. (013)

<<Zurek>> A 2017 Pew Charitable Trusts and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report titled, [10 Policies to Prevent and Respond to Childhood Lead Exposure](#) found that keeping blood lead levels of children born in 2018 at zero would generate \$84 billion in societal benefits by reducing special education, health care and criminal justice costs and increasing economic productivity and revenue.

From Rosner's perspective, we need to prioritize lead poisoning prevention to reduce the loss of human potential.

<<Rosner>> Everyone's always talking about the enormous cost of getting rid of lead. And hopefully, we can think of the needs of the society and good for human beings. Helping kids and protecting them after a century of knowledge. And that's what's so frustrating. And we still claim that's too expensive to do anything about it. That's nuts after a century. (020)

<<Zurek>> At Lewis and Clark Public Health, Moore and Stacey know this all too well.

<<Moore>> So it's part of a societal issue, in my mind. It's why we don't take this one issue out of many seriously...it's just kids. In the view of public health, every child's life is important to protect and to ensure that they don't get those nasty side effects from blood lead poisoning. (023)

<<Zurek>> Moore and Stacey hope lead exposure in Montana isn't as big of a problem as it seems.

<<Stacey>> But again, we really don't know until we have that widespread testing effort (004)

<<Zurek>> In Helena Montana, I'm Erica Zurek.