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Surgeon General Delivers Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes

On June 9 in Washington, D.C., the Acting U.S. Surgeon General Steven K. Galson, M.D., M.P.H., released his "[Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes](#)." According to the Acting Surgeon General, "the Call to Action looks at the ways housing can affect health, and its release will initiate a national dialogue about the importance of healthy homes."

The Call to Action is part of the national Healthy Homes Initiative led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD, CDC and other partners joined the Acting Surgeon General to highlight the public health importance of promoting healthy homes.

During the event, HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims also announced the release of HUD's [Healthy Homes Strategic Plan](#). HUD's plan demonstrates why healthy homes are a national priority, describes what steps should be taken to achieve healthier housing, and highlights the key public and private partners for implementation.

The remarks from Surgeon General Galson and HUD Deputy Secretary Sims, as well as other materials from the release of the Call to Action (plus a 4 ½ min. podcast of a Q&A session with the Surgeon General), are all available online at www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/healthyhomes/index.html.

NCEH/ATSDR Start "National Conversation" on Chemical Exposures

CDC's National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry launched an 18-month long "National Conversation" on public health and chemical exposures with a kickoff meeting in Washington, DC on Friday, June 26th. The stated intention of the "conversation" is "to identify and prioritize actions for strengthening the public health approach to chemical exposures." In addition to the kickoff event in DC, the conversation will include a number of meetings in locations to be announced around the country, in addition to web-based discussions and forums. As part of the initiative, NCEH/ATSDR has formed six working groups, covering monitoring, scientific understanding, policies and practices, chemical emergencies, serving communities, and education and communication. Individuals interested in serving on a work group have to apply through a nomination process and be selected by the conversation organizers. Additional information and nominating

forms are available at <http://www.2009nationalconversation.com/>.

The kick-off meeting in DC was attended by a wide range of participants, including national environmental groups, chemical industry representatives, and activists from communities impacted by toxic pollution. Several of the activists used the breaks and Q&A time to call upon government to “stop talking and start acting,” dismissing the meeting as yet more delay to addressing the problems they are facing and pointing to the [highly critical report](#) on the shortcomings of ATSDR recently issued by the staff of the House Committee on Science and Technology. Other groups viewed the meeting as a sign that the new Administration is open to changing the direction of the agency and national policy on chemical exposures. While the conversation is potentially a positive step, the Alliance notes that comprehensive reform of how we ensure the safety of chemicals used in our home and placed in our environment is going to require Congressional action and a thorough revision of the Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA).

HUD Announces \$4M in Healthy Homes Funding

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced on June 19 that \$4 million is available to improve methods to detect and control lead-based paint, mold and other housing-related safety hazards that harm children. These Healthy Homes Technical Studies grants will be awarded competitively to multiple academic and non-profit institutions, state, tribal or local governments that advance the recognition and control of residential health and safety hazards or improve our understanding of the link between housing and health.

The grants are intended to further implement of HUD’s [Healthy Homes Strategic Plan](#), and the Surgeon General’s [Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes](#), both recently released, which encourage government agencies, other research organizations, and scientists to develop and support a portfolio of rigorous healthy homes research. In addition, both documents recommend that agencies and sectors work together to provide guidance and technical assistance to support safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly housing options.

HUD will award approximately six to ten grants ranging from \$250,000 to \$800,000 each. Applications may be downloaded from HUD’s Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control website (www.hud.gov/lead). The deadline for submitting an application is August 18, 2009.

Gulf Coast Communities Hope to Rebuild Sustainably with Civic Works Act

The Gulf Coast Civic Works Act (HR 2269) has been widely received by community, environmental, and human rights organizations alike as a necessary piece of legislation to promote infrastructure, training, comprehensive flood protection and energy efficiency in the communities still recovering from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. HR 2269 was introduced in the U.S. House May 6th by Representatives Zoe Lofgren (CA), Rodney Alexander (LA), Joseph Cao (LA), Charles Gonzalez (TX), Charlie Melancon (LA), Gene Taylor (MS), Bennie Thompson (MS), John Conyers (MI), Alcee Hastings (FL), Barbara Lee (CA), John Lewis (GA), Peter Stark (CA), and Charlie Rangel (NY).

The Gulf Coast Civic Works Campaign (GCCWC), a non-partisan partnership of community, environmental, labor, student, and human rights organizations, argues it would create 100,000 “green” living wage jobs and



training opportunities for Gulf Coast residents and displaced people to rebuild critical infrastructure, restore natural flood protection and increase energy efficiency.



The legislation allows the federal government to partner directly with local leaders and non-profits to address remaining recovery challenges while building resilience to climate change, mitigating the effects of future deadly storms and confronting poverty. It also addresses the challenges faced by internally displaced, elderly, disabled, women, low-income, immigrant and minority communities. The Alliance applauds the introduction of this Act and encourages groups like the GCCWC to continue their work to enact this legislation.

The full bill is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d111:HR02269>. For more information on the campaign, visit <http://gccwc.wordpress.com/>.

Visit the Alliance's website to access [a number of resources](#) the Alliance has created over the past four years to aid flood-damaged communities in healthy rebuilding.

EPA Beginning to Approve RRP Trainers, Issues Additional Guidance

To date, EPA has approved six training entities to offer the classes necessary for contractors to become certified renovators under the RRP rule. Although this number is lower than many had expected two months after the opening of applications, the Alliance and other advocates have been assured that EPA is working on streamlining the process and ensuring approvals roll out more quickly in the coming weeks. Nearly 100 additional applications to become training providers remain in various stages of processing for accreditation.

To help clarify expectations and requirements for accreditation, EPA has released a [revised application](#) and additional information for training applicants. The new application includes an additional question about whether the provider intends to use non-permanent training facilities (i.e. deliver the training as a "road-show") and provides clearer instructions for what the EPA would like to see in the course test blueprint and quality control plan. Separately, EPA has provided additional instructions for taking photographs of students and numbering the training certificates. The new application is available here: <http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/trainapp.pdf> and the additional guidelines at <http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/trainerinstructions.htm>.

There is still a substantial need for additional training providers! The Alliance believes that at least 1,000 will be necessary to ensure contractors have access to training and to successfully implement the rule. We are continuing to support potential trainers through our train-the-trainer class, which will be taught in Chicago in August, and additional locations to be determined. For more information see http://afhh.org/res/res_training_RRP_train_the_trainer.htm.

Home Lead Safety Tax Credit Act Introduced

Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced the [Home Lead Safety Tax Credit Act of 2009 \(S. 1245\)](#). The bill would provide up to a \$3,000 tax credit for 50% the cost of lead hazard reduction work done by owners or tenants in low-income (less than 185% of poverty line) housing built before 1960.

Versions of this bill have been introduced in the last several congresses, including by Senators Clinton and Obama in the previous congress. Prospects for the bill, however, may be better this time around.

See the press releases from [Senator Whitehouse](#) and [Senator Snowe](#).

Recent Research Findings in Healthy Housing

Association found between bone lead elevation and memory impairment in older adults

A research article published in the May 27 online issue of *NeuroToxicology*, “Bone lead levels are associated with measures of memory impairment in older adults,” found that older adults with higher amounts of lead in their bones have greater memory impairment than adults with low lead levels.

Researchers found that in men and women 55-67 years old, higher bone lead levels were associated with poorer performance on tasks used to assess memory deficits—deficits often seen in adults with Alzheimer’s disease. The researchers measured shin- and heel-bone lead levels in 47 volunteers using X-ray fluorescence. Subjects with higher bone lead levels were less able to remember specific patterns or the locations of items. Other studies have found associations between lead exposure and cognitive deficits in older adults, but this is the first study to link lead exposure with specific measures of memory impairment that are characteristic of Alzheimer’s Disease. The abstract for this article is available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.neuro.2009.05.007>.

Popular weed killer kills human cells, intensifying debate over “inert” ingredients

Used in yards, farms and parks throughout the world, Monsanto Company’s Roundup is a top-selling weed killer. Now researchers say that one of Roundup’s so-called “inert” ingredients can kill human cells, particularly embryonic, placental and umbilical cord cells, stoking the debate about the solvents, preservatives, surfactants and other substances that manufacturers add to pesticides. Inert ingredients tend to be less scrutinized than active pest-killing ingredients, and since specific pesticide formulas are protected as trade secrets, manufacturers need not disclose them publicly.

Roundup’s active ingredient, glyphosate, is the most-used herbicide in the U.S. Most earlier health studies have focused on the risks of glyphosate, its active pest-killing ingredient, rather than other ingredients found in Roundup. In the new study, Roundup’s inert ingredient polyethoxylated tallowamine (POEA) multiplied the toxic effect of glyphosate and was actually more deadly to human embryonic, placental and umbilical cord cells than glyphosate itself. The researchers speculated that Roundup may cause pregnancy problems by interfering with hormone production, possibly leading to abnormal fetal development, low birth weights or miscarriages. They also said that their results highlight the need for health agencies to reconsider the safety of Roundup. The article which appeared in the January 2009 issue of the journal *Chemical Research in Toxicology* is available at <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/tx800218n>.

Pesticides remain in homes long after their use

An article in the June 15, 2009, issue of *Environmental Science and Technology* shows that pesticides, including some that have been banned for decades, persist in homes. The authors found that most floors in occupied homes in the U.S. have measurable levels of insecticides that may serve as sources of exposure to occupants.

Dust samples were analyzed for 24 current and past-use residential insecticides, all of which were found in some of the homes. Fipronil and permethrin, both currently used, were found in 40 percent and 89 percent of homes, respectively. DDT and chlordane—two pesticides that have been banned for decades—were detected in 42 percent and 74 percent of homes, respectively. Other insecticides banned from residential use several years ago were also found in a sizeable percentage of the homes.

Researchers conclude that children could be at particular health risk because of their more frequent contact with floors, and future generations could also be exposed. These exposures should be considered in health risk assessments that guide public safety regulations, the authors recommend. The abstract for this article is available at <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es8030243>.

In Memoriam - Kathryn R. Mahaffey, Ph.D.

The Alliance would like to recognize and applaud the life and work of Kathryn R. Mahaffey, who passed away on June 2, 2009, after decades of work that advanced the nation's health and environment. She is remembered as a beloved wife, mother, scientist and community member who served as a source of inspiration with her principled and tireless intellect. She was the rare scientist who knew how to apply the lessons from academic research to protect public health. Her work changed the face of epidemic heavy metal poisoning, endocrine disruptors and many other environmental pollutants that afflict children, pregnant women and other at-risk populations.

Dr. Mahaffey had an exceptional and diverse career, with appointments at FDA, NIOSH, NIEHS and EPA. Most recently, she served as a Professorial Lecturer at the George Washington University School of Public Health. She was the first to ensure that the number of lead poisoned children in the U.S. was determined accurately through the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey in the 1970s, allowing the nation to track a dramatic reduction in children's blood lead levels over the past three decades. She also conducted path-breaking scholarship on mercury poisoning. She was a principal author of the eight-volume Mercury Study Report to Congress that broke new scientific ground and focused national attention on mercury exposure in the U.S. As a public health activist, her work won cheers from children's health scientists and attacks from those who considered the facts to be injurious to their interests.

In addition to her scientific work, she founded and led the Green Group at the Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ in Bethesda, MD, and was a volunteer math tutor and leader of the math club at DC's Marie Reed Elementary School, working with underachieving students. She is survived by her husband, David Jacobs, Director of Research at the National Center for Healthy Housing; her daughter, Harriet Meehan; her son, Bert Kramer; her mother, Harriet Mahaffey; two sisters, Rebecca Latimer and Deborah Westover; two step-children, Paul and Robin Jacobs; and two grandchildren, Lillian and Evalyn Meehan.

Upcoming Events

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) will host a workshop entitled "Public Health 101 for Non-Lawyers: Using the Law as a Tool to Protect and Promote the Public's Health" on July 29, 2009 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET in Orlando, Florida. For additional information, please visit www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/PHLaw/index.cfm.

On August 6-7, 2009 the annual summer symposium on high-impact green affordable housing and community development will take place at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. The symposium is titled: Green Homes & Sustainable Communities: The changing landscape for financing, developing, and managing green affordable housing and is presented by Enterprise and Nixon Peabody LLP Legally Green, sponsored by the Home Depot Foundation. Register online at www.ipedinc.net.

The Alliance continues to hold "Train the Trainer" courses throughout the country in order to help prepare organizations to become accredited trainers under EPA's rule. In partnership with the Neighborworks Training Institute, the Alliance will be holding an upcoming training in Chicago on August 17-18th. To register for the Chicago NTI, visit <http://nw.org/network/training/courses/default.asp?course=ucrsdetailAll1.asp?course=CP246>.

Save the date for the symposium entitled "Promoting Environmental and Policy Change to Support Healthy Aging," to be held September 15-16, 2009, in Chapel Hill, NC. This symposium is a third in a series funded by CDC's Healthy Aging Program. More information on this symposium can be found at www.prc-han.org.

The National Mid-Year Conference on Eliminating Childhood Lead Poisoning, Implementing Healthy Homes Programs and Combating Indoor Environmental Hazards will be held October 15-16, 2009 in Philadelphia,

PA. The conference brings together professionals from health, housing, community development, community groups, advocacy organizations, the lead industry, real estate firms, and residential and commercial facilities to explore the ways to undertake programs and projects designed to prevent incidents of lead poisoning and eliminate indoor environmental hazards. For more information, visit <http://www.leadmoldconferences.com/website/>.

The 2009 National Environmental Public Health Conference: Healthy People in a Healthy Environment seeks to promote the nation's environmental health capacity by enhancing the expertise of environmental health professionals - including public health and healthcare professionals, academic researchers, representatives from communities and organizations, as well as advocacy and business groups with a primary interest in environmental public health. The conference will be held October 25-28 in Atlanta, GA.

The American Public Health Association will be holding its Annual Meeting, November 7-11, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA. The theme this year is "Water and Public Health: the 21st Century Challenge." The conference will explore the latest public health challenges and learn about what can be done to protect our resources, our health and our world. For more information or to register, visit <http://www.apha.org/meetings/>.

ALLIANCE NEWS

The Alliance's Executive Director Patrick MacRoy was a guest this past week on WTIC's "Greener Living with Dr. G." Patrick spoke with Dr. G about a range of healthy homes issues including lead poisoning, air fresheners, formaldehyde, and indoor air quality. To hear the podcast, visit WTIC's webpage at: <http://www.wtic.com/pages/1634184.php>. Click on the left-hand link under "Greener Living w/Dr. G 6/20/09 Hr. 2."

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