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Contractors say new EPA rules on remodeling in homes built in 1978 or earlier will make projects much more expensive. The rules are designed to protect children from being poisoned by lead dust created when old paint is disturbed. Remodeler Pat Mahoney describes work at a job behind a Cooper Young house, where old rotted wood is being replaced.

Sharp-toothed regulations taking effect next week are intended to save children from the permanent harm of lead poisoning, but may stun some homeowners planning to remodel, some contractors say.

"They are going to be shocked when they see these higher prices," said Pat Mahoney, chairman of the remodelers' council of the Memphis Area Home Builders Association.

Some in the industry figure the rules will add \$2,000 to a project's cost, he said.

The new rules start April 22 for contractors whose work disturbs painted surfaces in houses built before 1978, when lead-based paint was outlawed. The rules also embrace schools and day-care buildings.

Shelby County has 153,000 houses

built before 1950, "and probably all have lead-based paint on them somewhere," said Betsy Shockley, who heads Memphis and Shelby County Health Department's Childhood Lead Prevention Program.

Contractors could face fines up to \$37,500 per day for each violation, depending on the degree of noncompliance.