

DIY Repairs & Renovations Gone Wrong

North Carolina Lead & Healthy Homes Stakeholder Meeting

November 18, 2025

Tom Neltner, National Director, Unleaded Kids

tneltner@unleadedkids.org

www.unleadedkids.org



Agenda

- What is Your Experience?
- About Do-It-Yourselfers (DIY)
- State Attorney's General 2003 Agreement with Paint Industry
- Indiana Secret Shoppers Programs
- Indiana Paint Retailers Law
- DIY Shows
- Thoughts on DIY Test Kits



What is Your Experience?

Share your stories



About Do-It-Yourselfers

- Big business:
 - US DIY market is worth \$290 billion in 2025
 - Average American will spend between \$5,000 and \$15,000 on their DIY projects
 - Home Depot has 27% market share and Lowes 18%
- Motives:
 - 36% – Sole benefit of improving our living spaces
 - 29% – Due to wear and tear
- Sources:
 - 47% admit to watching YouTube or social media before starting a project
- Who:
 - 21 to 30 year olds: 24%
 - 31 to 40 year olds: 26%

SensibleDigs, 2/12/2025



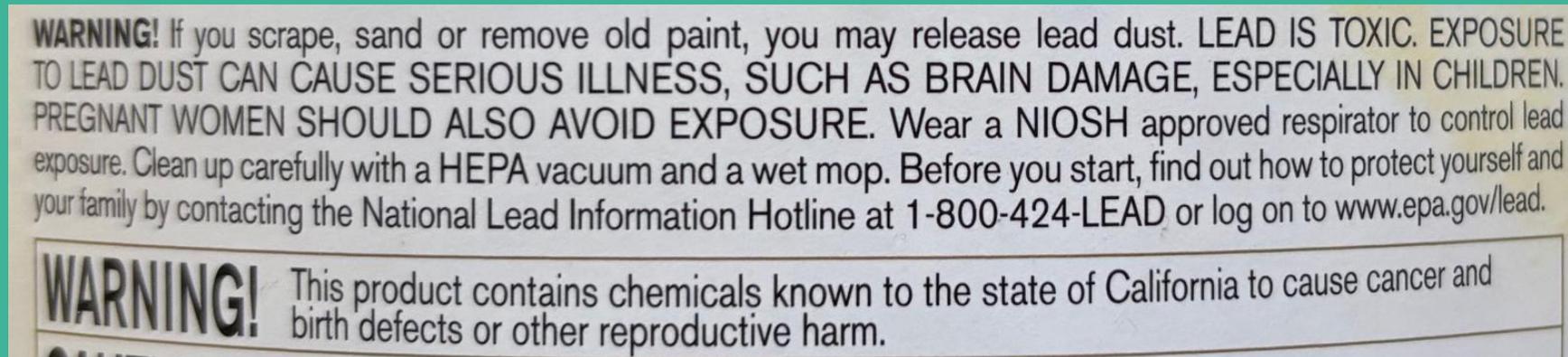
2003 State AG Agreement with Paint Industry

- 45 state Attorneys General (including North Carolina's Roy Cooper) signed agreement with National Paint and Coating Association (NPCA - now American Coatings Association) regarding “Lead Exposure Warnings and Education and Training Programs”
- Goal: “Promote timely and meaningful notice to consumers of the potential risks of lead exposure that could arise out of surface preparation during remodeling, renovation or repainting where old lead-based paint is present”



2003 State AG-NPCA Agreement (cont.)

- Lead Exposure Warning Labels – Starting in 2004



- Stickers on Lid of Paint Can – Sept. 30, 2003 to April 30, 2005

WARNING! If you scrape, sand or remove old paint, you may release lead dust. LEAD IS TOXIC. Contact the National Lead Information Hotline at 1-800-424-LEAD or log on to www.epa.gov/lead.

2003 State AG-NPCA Agreement (cont.)

- Point of Sale Information – Sept. 30, 2003 to Dec. 31, 2007
 - Written material, in both English and Spanish, in a manner that is reasonably designed to ensure that consumers receive point-of-purchase information
- Training Programs – Sept. 30, 2003 to Dec. 31, 2007
 - About 600 training sessions and as many as 15,000-30,000 people will have had an opportunity to receive the training
- Discount Equipment Program
 - Rental and purchase of HEPA vacuum cleaners
 - Purchase of NIOSH-approved respirators
- Online Retailer Education Initiative for Retail Sales Staff



Indiana Secret Shoppers Programs

- Improving Kids' Environment (IKE)
- 2004 IKE Report: “Inept But At Your Service: Can You Trust Your Hardware Store”
- 2005 IKE Report: “Your Kid’s Health: Can You Trust Your Paint and Pesticide Store?”
- 2005 Governor Mitch Daniels Environmental Excellence Award to IKE for Secret Shopper Survey



Indiana Secret Shoppers Pesticides

- Indiana Pesticide Consultant Rule – 2001
 - Applied to retailers providing advice on selection and use of pesticides
 - Required retailers to have
 - Registered pesticide consultant
 - Notice to employees
 - Notice to consumers
- IKE filed complaints
- State Chemist conducted site inspections
- Many violations and some repeat offenders



IKE 2004 Report – Pesticides and Paint

- 45 visits to 39 Indianapolis retail **hardware** stores
- Paint
 - 80% of paint recommended dry sanding to remove paint on a door to a kids' room in a house built in the 1920s.
 - Even when asked explicitly whether lead-based paint might be a problem, 53% of the clerks continued to give dangerous advice.
 - Many advised IKE to ignore the paint can's lead warning label.
 - No store had basic reference information on lead-safe painting, maintenance or renovation practices on hand.
- Pesticides
 - 95% of the pesticide department clerks violated Indiana law when they helped
 - IKE select a pesticide to kill cockroaches. 74% of the time the clerks advised the customer to use toxic sprays and foggers to kill cockroaches.

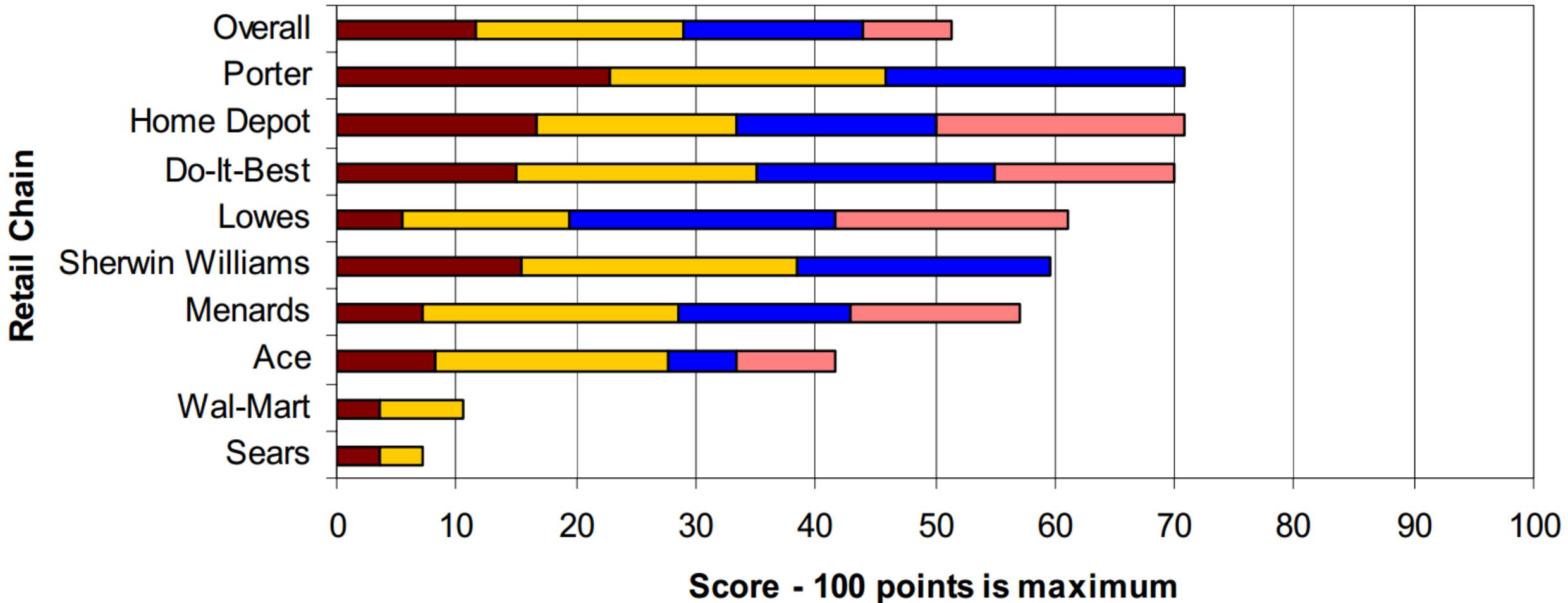
IKE 2005 Report – Pesticides and Paint

- 85 Indianapolis retailers selling paint or pesticides
- Paint
 - Initial advice
 - Final advice
 - EPA pamphlet
 - LeadCheck swabs
- Pesticide
 - Quality advice given
 - Warning Signs
 - Advice illegally given

IKE 2005 Report – Pesticides and Paint

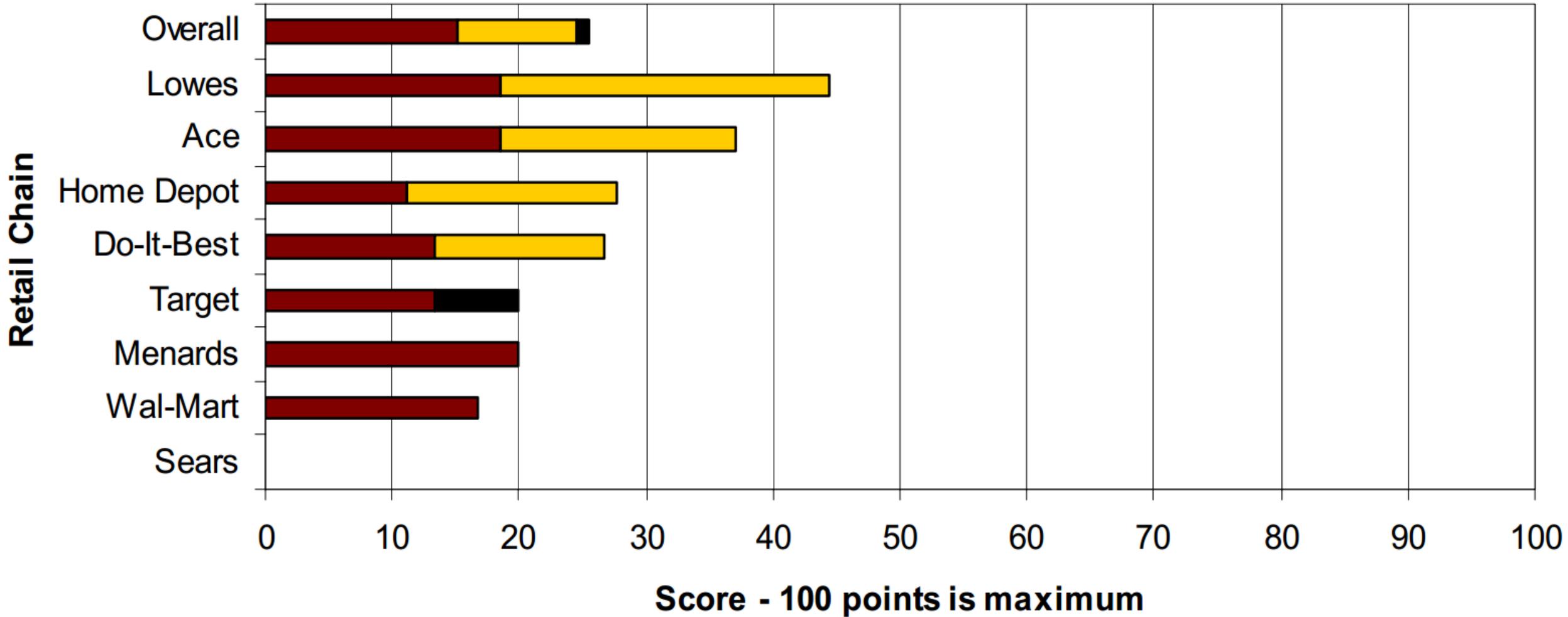
- 85 Indianapolis retailers selling paint or pesticides
- “Some environmentally friendly folks say that lead 'might' cause some problems, but the chances are astronomically low. We are talking like 4 in 10 million. You could eat a bowl of chips and it 'might' be a problem.” That lead was absorbed by the digestive tract only, “but I don't want to down play it, because it has happened and that's why they have the warning.” “Call your realtor and strong arm them, telling them you are going to call the attorney general.”
- “Not very likely, but if you do have it, you're going to want to sand it all down.”
- “It's something they found in plaster. After it sits for a while it gets lead in it.” “That nonsense, I mean look at me--and I do it all the time.”
- “Bomb it, bomb the heck out of it.” “You can get a mask or something like that if you want, but they're scented these days, so it won't be so bad on you.”

Protecting Children from Lead-Based Paint Hazards: Performance of Retail Chains Serving Indianapolis



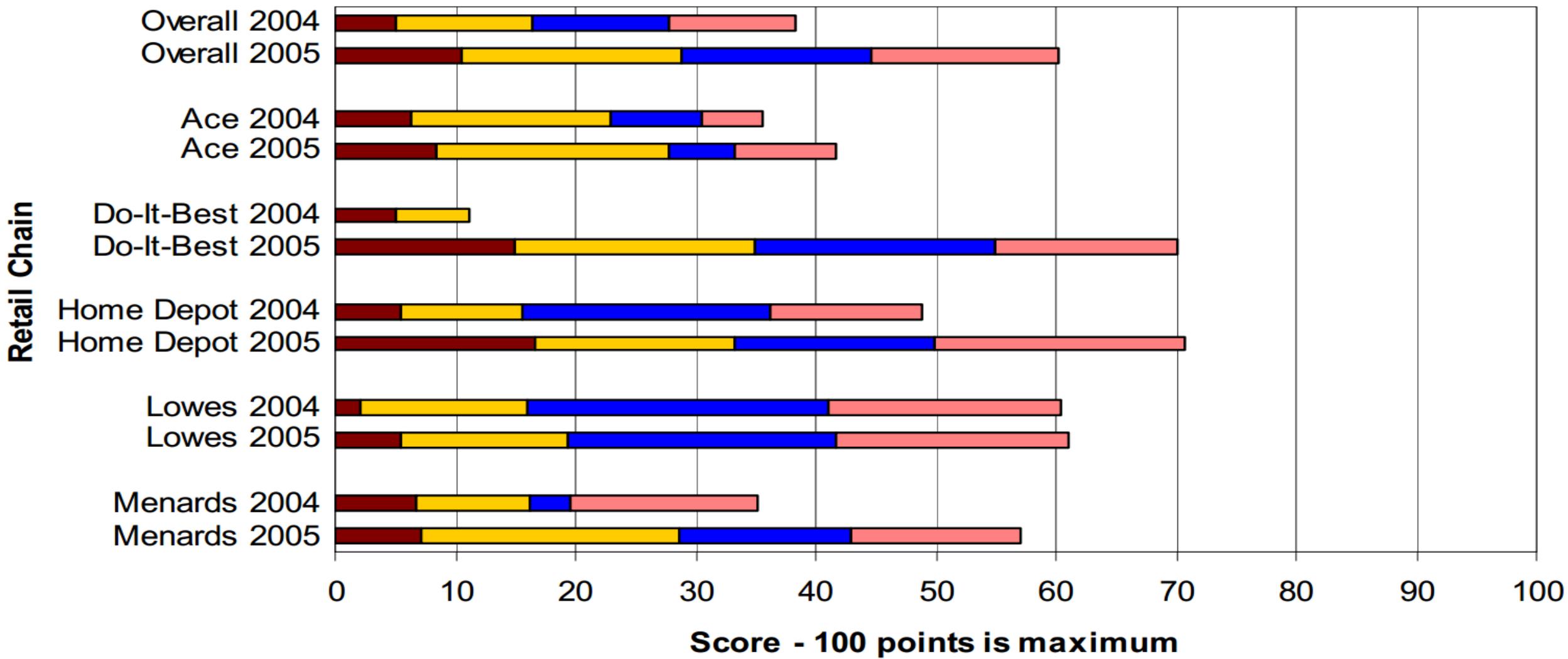
■ Initial Advice ■ Final Advice ■ EPA Pamphlet ■ Lead Detection Kit

Protecting Children from Indoor Pesticide Hazards: Performance of Retail Chains Serving Indianapolis



■ Quality Advice Given ■ Warning Signs ■ Advice Legally Given

Improvements from 2004 to 2005 for Lead-Based Paint Hazards by Five Major Hardware Chains Serving Indianapolis



Initial Advice
 Final Advice
 EPA Pamphlet
 Lead Detection Kit

Indiana Paint Retailers Law

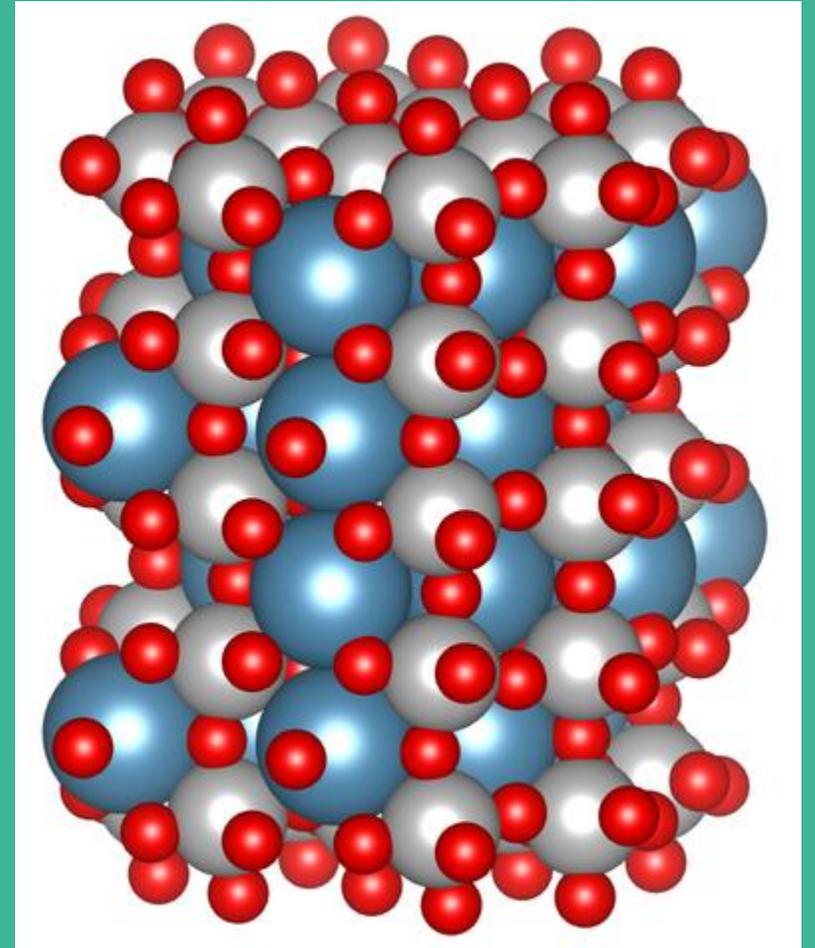
- IC 16-41-39.4-7 enacted in 2008 with rules in 2009
- Retailers selling paint or paint products:
 - Offer for sale a lead-test kits capable of determining presence of lead-based paint
 - Provide customers with EPA “Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home” or other approved by state department of health
 - Ensure at least one employee providing advice attends training program and trains other employees.
- Retailer of consumer products that says it contains or may contain lead must not obscure warning

DIY Shows

- “Fixer to Fabulous” on HGTV/Discovery - January 2024
- “Maine Cabin Masters” on HGTV/Discovery Network – October 2022
- “Good Bones” on HGTV/Discovery Network – April 2022
- “Texas Flip N Move,” on regional networks – February 2021
- “Rehab Addict” – February 2020
- “Bargain Mansions” – February 2020
- “Fixer Upper” on HGTV/Discovery Network – April 2018

Thoughts on Home Test Kits

- Pronounced “pe-rov-skite”
- Mixture of methyl amine and hydrobromic acid in 99% isopropanol solution.
- Lead halide perovskite glows green under ultraviolet (UV) light.
- Down to 100 micrograms with normal UV light
- Two brands – Lumetallix and Fluorospec
- <https://unleadedkids.org/test-kits-potential-game-changer/2025/07/15/>



DIY Repairs & Renovations Gone Wrong

North Carolina Lead & Healthy Homes Stakeholder Meeting

November 18, 2025

Tom Neltner, National Director, Unleaded Kids

tneltner@unleadedkids.org

www.unleadedkids.org

