PRESS RELEASE

ENFORCEMENT OF LEAD PAINT REGULATIONS TO REGULATE THE MANUFACTURING AND IMPORTING OF PAINT PRODUCTS IN SIERRA LEONE.

Freetown, 30th October, 2026 – The Environment Protection Agency through the Sierra Leone Parliament has developed and passed into law a new lead paint regulation in March 2025, which has elapsed its one-year moratorium period and is now in effect for enforcement. The regulations set a legal limit of 90 parts per million (ppm) for total lead in all paint manufactured, imported, or sold in Sierra Leone. This places Sierra Leone as one of the first Anglophone African countries to bring in national regulation in line with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regulation C/REG.13/07/23 in 2023. Lead is important to target because there is no known safe level of lead exposure. Children are most at risk: lead can permanently damage their developing brains, lowering Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and affecting learning and behaviour, even at low levels.

The regulation is borne out of a 2024 study conducted by us in partnership with the Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP), where nearly one in four paints tested in Freetown contained hazardous levels of lead, a dangerous neurotoxin that inflicts severe damage on children's health, even at low levels. A key recommendation from the study was to bring in a regulation that sets a legal limit of 90 parts per million (ppm) for total lead in paint.

LEEP has since supported the EPA to ensure in-country enforcement capabilities with an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyser on loan, technical training for EPA staff, and reformulation guidance to help manufacturers switch to lead-free paint. In July 2026, 18 EPA staff completed a four-day training on using the XRF analyser, which can test paint for lead in seconds. This gives the EPA the in-house capacity to detect lead paint on the market and act on it, in line with this year's ILPPW theme, "From detection to prevention". In July 2026, a follow-up market survey by the EPA, supported by LEEP, found that all 23 paint brands sampled had lead levels below the 90-ppm national limit, a major shift since 2024. The EPA will continue to monitor paints on the market, including imports, through regular inspections.

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Given this context and this year's International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) theme, 'From detection to prevention', we are pleased to inform the public that the Lead Paint Regulations 2025 are now in force and will be enforced in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau, Customs Department, National Revenue Authority, Sierra Leone Police, and the Ministries of Trade and Industry and Transport and Aviation, which will regulate the manufacturing and importing of paint in Sierra Leone. Members of the public are encouraged to buy paint from manufacturers and suppliers that comply with the regulations, such as any local paint manufacturer, which we have now tested and verified to be lead-free.

Declaration of Conformity forms have already been signed by the majority of businesses in the paint industry and will be displayed at strategic points in their places of business. Previous engagements had been done with the media and school nature clubs, and the highlighted issues at the Collaborating Learning and Adapting(CLA26) Conference had secured formal commitments from sections of the paint manufacturing community. Others are strongly encouraged to comply, and defaulters will be penalised.

The Environment Protection Agency remains committed to building an environmentally secure future for Sierra Leone.

For further enquiries, kindly contact the Senior Public Relations Officer, Mary Sia Foyah, at mary.foyah@epa.gov.sl or at +232 88 508 695, or our toll-free line 1999 from any orange line.

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