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## **EnviroVantage specializes in lead paint removal: Contracted by the city of Manchester, N.H.**

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During the past year, the city of Manchester was awarded a HUD grant in the amount of \$3 million to facilitate the removal of lead in low income housing. The provisions of the grant provide for a "win-win" for both the tenant, who has a safety concern for the welfare of the children in the building, and the landlord / owner who has concern for both liability issues and return on investment.

Most of Manchester's low income housing is made primarily up of 20th century wood-framed multi-family units. The majority of these units contain lead paint. Even more alarming is the number of foreign born children diagnosed with lead poisoning just months after arriving in this country. In fact, last fall the city of Manchester lost a young immigrant girl from Somalia to lead paint poisoning. Her death only increased the attention to the problem in Manchester. The grant happened to follow a few months later. Today, Kate Kirkwood heads the city's Lead Hazard Control Program.

Lead paint is highly toxic, and was banned in 1978, but remains in millions of housing units. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 300,000 children nationwide have elevated levels of lead in their blood. Today in the granite state, the allowable lead levels in the bloodstream have been reduced to the levels recommended by the EPA, a level one half the amount previously allowed. However, most experts agree that no level of lead is safe.

The HUD grant provided the city with the ability to loan up to approximately \$8,000 per unit to remove the lead paint and render the unit safe. The loan to the building owner (or home owner) is very generous in its financial specifications - 0% for the life of the loan, no principle, no interest. Full repayment is due only when the property is sold or transferred.

To the property owner, the benefits go on and on. The loan includes the ability to upgrade buildings with energy saving improvements, such as new windows. Property values increase, risk of liability decreases and the landlord has created a safer environment for families - presumably maintaining the attractiveness of the rental space.

More recently, the cities of Nashua and Worcester received a similar grant. The government sets a target for its investment and expects the cities to achieve a goal of approximately 275 units over a 36 month term. If the goal is reached, the expectation is that the grant will be renewed for another 36 months.

EnviroVantage was contracted by the city to clean a classic 3 decker and make it safe. EnviroVantage is a N.H. based environmental contractor specializing in lead paint removal. They are centrally located in Epping, and are the region's leader in the field, as well as in the removal of other environmental contaminants. Their 14,000 s/f facility serves as a distribution and training center and shop facility.

In addition to the lead paint issue, the Manchester 3-decker had additional environmental contaminants! The project could not start until some 60 mattresses, countless bedbugs and cockroaches were exterminated and / or removed. Lead paint was found on almost every surface - in every window and door, some of the moldings and even in a bathtub. The lead paint on the exterior had leached into the ground making it a hazard to toddlers.

The challenge for EnviroVantage was to remove the lead on the lower walls and woodwork, replace the windows with vinyl replacements, cover the upper walls with luan to encapsulate the old lead paint, and remove the top 3" of topsoil and recover with turf. The common areas included the staircases, the porches and the halls. The porches were transformed from being open to the weather to being enclosed with new windows. All the work had to be completed within 30 days to ensure a minimum loss of rental income to the property owner. The time of year was late winter, the ground was still frozen, the caulking had to be heated prior to application and the building had to be secured each and every day to assure safety of the EnviroVantage workers each morning.

Today, the building owner has in 6 updated rental units, a reduced need for maintenance, a clear reduction in liability, lower heating costs and a safer environment for his tenants in a higher valued property - and no money out of pocket. When he chooses to sell, the loan is due. Hopefully the economic climate will erase the expense. A "win-win." for the city, for the tenants and for the building owner / investor.

Thankfully the epidemic of childhood lead poisoning is being addressed at the local, state and national level. EnviroVantage is proud of it's efforts to ensure a healthy life and bright future for every child.

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