

Welcome to Norwich Bulletin Norwich, Conn.

Customer Service

[norwichbulletin.com](#) [Weather](#) [Jobs](#) [Cars](#) [Homes](#) [Shopping](#) [Classifieds](#) [Dating](#)



STORY SEARCH

- » Home
- » News
- Local News
- Sports
- Obituaries
- Nation/World
- Opinion
- Living
- Business of Money
- Entertainment
- Photo Galleries
- Weather
- Technology
- » Communities
- » Customer Service



## Lead permeates Plainfield home

By JESSICA DURKIN  
Norwich Bulletin

**PLAINFIELD**-- When Tammy and Kerry Miner budgeted to buy their first home, they thought the \$139,000 Victorian-era house on Butterworth Avenue was the right choice.

"One thing we liked about it was it was move-in condition, we didn't have to do anything," Kerry Miner said.

Five years later, the couple is scrambling to find tens of thousands of dollars to stay in their house after lead paint was found throughout the four-bedroom structure, built in 1910.

The Miners signed a form when they purchased the house that said there was a possibility lead paint could be present, but they would have to pay for a lead test. They did not think it was a real threat, because lead paint was banned in 1978.

A seller's contract disclosed that the previous owner had no knowledge of lead in the home.

"If a seller says they have no knowledge of lead paint, in a home built before 1978, it doesn't mean it's not there," said John Bolduc, Eastern Connecticut Association of Realtors executive director. "The buyer has the right to have a lead paint test at their expense. The expenses of all testable items are negotiable at the agreement."

Kerry and Tammy skipped getting the test before they bought the house.

In July 2005, after feeling ill for some time, Tammy underwent blood testing that revealed she had high lead levels. She quickly had her son, Julian, 2, tested for lead poisoning. He had lead levels of 21 micrograms per deciliter, twice the Environmental Protection Agency acceptable standard.



Tali Greene

Tammy Miner says she will have to pay thousands.

### WHAT IT MEANS Primary school

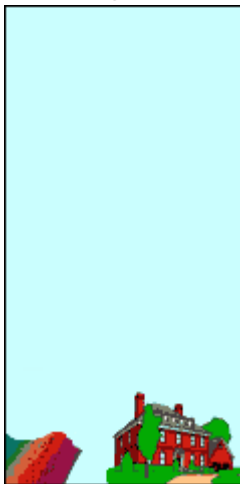
- The primary school district generally
- Chippit is on a fricti leaded dust children, pr

-- Source: [www.leadstest.com](#)

### WHERE TO GO If you are s

- Connec Program, H
- Windha

ADVERTISEMENT



ADVERTISEMENT



ADVERTISEMENT



careerbuilder.com

**WE HAVE THE MOST JOBS.**

Click here to search over a million jobs

careerbuilder.com

By law, the Northeastern District Department of Health was notified of the son's lead levels. Following state procedure, the department cited the home and ordered the Miners to remove the lead paint.

774-7350.

- New Lo

The home's baseboards, window trims, door jambs and cedar shingles have all tested positive for lead paint. The cost to remove the old paint ranges from \$74,000 to \$110,000. Treatments include encapsulation, where latex paint is used to cover surfaces, to stripping wood trim, or all-out removal of the affected areas.

**File down**

- [Lead p](#)

Ruth Ann Norton, executive director at the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning in Baltimore, Md., said any lead paint left untreated will continue to pose a threat to the family's health. Exposure in children could bring anything from reading disabilities to aggressive behavior, and organ damage. In adults, symptoms could include organ damage, she said.

"I think Connecticut has the right idea that it has to be abated because they will remain at risk," Norton said. "What needs to be done is assistance should be set up for people who reach financial barriers in that abatement goal."

## Children affected

In 2002, approximately 1,700 children in Connecticut had blood lead levels of more than 10 micrograms per deciliter, which is the danger level for lead, according to a Connecticut Childhood Lead Poisoning Elimination Task Force report. There are also more than 435,000 housing units built before 1950 in the state, according to 2000 U.S. Census figures.

Amy McLean Salls, executive director of the Connecticut Citizens Research Group and project coordinator for Lead Poisoning Prevention and Housing Program, said lead paint can exist in any structure built before 1978 that hasn't been remediated for lead paint. She said there isn't enough public awareness on the subject, so homeowners are often caught off-guard.

"That's kind of the untold story, parents who own their own houses, who do home remediation and trying to fix up their kid's bedroom, and end up poisoning their own children because they have no knowledge of how to work safely with older homes," Salls said.

Officials at the Northeast District Department of Health said lead poisoning is rare in the region. The department is working on five documented cases reported in 2005.

"In major cities it's much higher than in Northeastern Connecticut," Nancy Brault, the district's supervisor of environmental services, said.

## A second job

Tammy Miner, who, like her husband, is a full-time Mohegan Sun cardroom floor supervisor, has made finding lead removal assistance her second job. She uses the Internet for research and continues to make countless phone calls to state and federal agencies.

Her efforts yielded one grant last year from the Lead Elimination Action Program through Housing and Urban Development Department that will cover \$24,000 of the abatement cost. But they must come up with the remainder

With a past bankruptcy filing on their credit history, the two said they cannot get a bank loan, and their homeowner's insurance policy does not cover lead paint removal. The couple makes too much money to qualify for other grants available to property owners, they said.

"We don't have \$90,000 and if we don't have \$90,000, we won't have \$90,000 next week, or next year," Tammy, 30, said. "Now basically we're just trying to fight (the regulations) and find money."

### **Workable plan**

The health department is in charge of monitoring the Miners' case, and Brault said it works with families to come up with a workable plan for removing lead. Policy states that the department can take court action if property owners are noncompliant, but Brault said the agency tries to avoid worst-case scenarios.

"If she or anyone that comes up with a good plan that makes sense, the health department will bend over backwards to help property owners reach compliance," Brault said. "We're not here to penalize people, we're here to help people through the process."

That is little consolation to the Miners, who are beginning to think that their future may involve saying goodbye to their investment.

"Either way, we're going to lose the house: We don't do the abatement, we lose the house. We do the abatement, we can't afford it, and we lose the house," Tammy said.

The Miners also think there is a possibility they and their property were contaminated through foul air and debris from the InterRoyal Mill fire in April - three months before Tammy's first blood test. Their home is within a mile of the charred mill shell.

Since then, the family's lead levels have dropped to safe levels. Tammy sweeps, vacuums and mops her home regularly to minimize any paint dust that could be generated from high-friction areas, such as door jambs. The Miners have maintained a healthy environment at home and are questioning the state law.

In Connecticut, if a home has been cited with lead paint hazards and occupants have had high lead levels in their system, the property must be abated, even if lead levels subsequently come down.

"My son doesn't have lead poisoning anymore," Kerry said. "He took the tests and he's below the levels. They said whatever we're doing to help prevent the lead poisoning, then it's working."

**Reach Jessica Durkin at 774-5563 or [jdurkin@norwichbulletin.com](mailto:jdurkin@norwichbulletin.com)**

**Originally published January 7, 2006**



Print this article



Email this to a friend



Subscribe Now



[Subscribe](#) | [Place an Ad](#)  
Copyright © 2006 Norwich Bulletin  
All rights reserved.  
Users of this site agree to the  
[Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)  
(Terms updated 7/20/05)

