**EPA Watches TV Too**

EPA Fines Renovation and Reality Shows

As an EHS professional, have you ever found it hard to turn off the part of your brain that sees potential violations when you’re out and about, living your life away from the job? Our industrial hygienists talk about seeing mold in restaurants and our safety professionals find bad staircases, exposed wires and more. Have you ever been watching a TV show where you started wondering if they were following the rules like you have to every day?

Well EPA has been watching TV too, and has been handing out fines to some of your favorite reality shows.

**Clean Air Act Violation for Truck Show**

The Discovery Channel’s Diesel Brothers reality show was fined for violations of the Clean Air Act. The show takes diesel trucks and makes extreme modifications to them. They have touted their trucks as “rolling coal.”

The fine was related to trucks with non-existent or bypassed emissions systems.

The show was exposed when a group called the Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment purchased one of the trucks and sent it for emissions testing. Testing found the truck was 36 times dirtier than a normal stock truck. The physicians group filed a citizen enforcement action under the Clean Air Act, and a court case ensued. The show was ordered to pay $761,451 to the federal government for the violation, $90,000 to the state of Utah, and the court costs for the Utah Physicians group, believed to be $1.2 million.

**Home Renovation Shows in Trouble**

Home renovation shows have been getting fines for violations of [Toxic Substances Control Act’s (TSCA) Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule (RRP Rule)](https://www.epa.gov/lead/lead-renovation-repair-and-painting-program-rules).

The RRP Rule pertains to firms performing renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes, child care facilities and pre-schools built before 1978. These companies need to be certified by EPA (or an EPA-authorized state), use certified renovators who have been trained by EPA-approved training providers, and follow lead-safe work practices. This includes in-house maintenance staff and any outside contractors they use.

The companies responsible for producing the shows ***Fixer Upper***, ***Bargain Mansions***, ***Rehab Addict***, and ***Texas Flip N Move*** have all gotten fined for violating this RRP Rule.

**Home Renovation Show Violations**

Perhaps the most notable and highest fined of those listed is Chip and Joanna Gaines’ Magnolia Homes and the show ***Fixer Upper***. They were fined $40,000 and had to pay an additional $160,000 for lead abatement projects in high-risk homes in Waco, Texas. This is because they violated the RRP Rule for renovations of 33 properties in the Waco area. As another part of the settlement with EPA, they were required to implement an internal monitoring program. They also produced a video about renovating lead-contaminated homes that was shown on their website and social media channels. In Episode 16 of Season 5, they also featured testing an older home for lead and showed some precautions taken required by the rule.

***Rehab Addict*** and ***Bargain Mansions*** were using unlicensed and untrained workers who were not following lead-safe practices. These shows were fined a total of $59,000, and that includes several Kansas City-area subcontractors that Bargain Mansions used to help them. Consequently, the violations included everyone involved. The hosts of each show will be required to take steps to ensure compliance in the future. They are also to educate the public about lead-based paint hazards and appropriate renovation through videos, social media postings and public events.

The most recent was ***Texas Flip N Move***. In addition to a fine, they have to do the same tasks as ***Fixer Upper*** did, plus use a third-party entity to conduct lead abatement in low-income target-housing residences or child-occupied facilities within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

**Home Depot Fined for RRP Too**

On the topic of RRP, just in December (2020), Home Depot, often a major sponsor for renovation shows, negotiated a nationwide settlement with EPA on violations of the RRP Rule. Home Depot uses outside contractors to conduct home improvement work as an add-on service for its local stores. EPA found hundreds of cases where Home Depot was sending uncertified firms to conduct renovations that fell under the certified firms and trained workers requirements. Home Depot wasn’t keeping compliance documentation of certifications, training or use of lead-safe work practices. Contractors also weren’t passing out the required lead pamphlets to occupants.

The fine was $20.75 million, plus an additional $750,000 to Utah, $732,000 to Massachusetts and $50,000 to Rhode Island. Home Depot is required to implement a comprehensive, corporate-wide program to ensure its contractors are properly licensed, trained and certified to use lead-safe work practices. Where the most serious violations occurred, they’re offering those customers testing by a certified inspector and then additional specialized lead cleaning if something is found.

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What have you seen on TV that your environmental or safety eyes couldn’t NOT see? Choose one of the social media buttons to the left and share and comment on this story. Make sure you tag us! (@iSi\_ICT on Twitter, @isienvironmental on Facebook and @ isi-environmental-services on LinkedIn!)