

NYCHA's Interim XRF Lead Testing Results

NYCHA's proactive initiative to perform inspections for lead-based paint using advanced technology – the X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometer – in more than 134,000 of its apartments across New York City is now more than two-thirds completed. As of May 7, 2021, NYCHA has completed inspections in 90,013 apartments, over 67 percent of the initiative. NYCHA has received results for 66,546 apartments: 43,627 have tested negative at the federal standard of 1.0 mg/cm² and 22,919 have tested positive.

In April 2019, Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYCHA announced the XRF initiative, the first-ever plan to perform lead inspections in over 134,000 individual public housing apartments across New York City. During an inspection, NYCHA tests approximately 150 components in each apartment for lead-based paint. Components can include a wall, a ceiling, a window sill, or a door buck, among many other items. Thus far, in units that have tested positive, in 46 percent of cases only one component in the apartment has tested positive for lead-based paint and in 21 percent of cases only two components have tested positive. This component-level information is then collected into a database so NYCHA can effectively work to remediate and abate lead-based paint across its portfolio. Put simply, the XRF initiative is critical because NYCHA will now know where the lead is above current standards, ensuring NYCHA can address the condition and protect against the risks associated with disturbing lead paint.

The XRF testing is intended to identify where lead-based paint may exist. It is not a finding that the paint is chipping or peeling. For example, bathroom fixtures that are enamel covered may have lead-based materials under the enamel. In such a case, the sensitive XRF test will indicate a "positive" finding for lead.

Since NYCHA has never conducted such extensive testing, NYCHA has not known where lead-based paint existed in each apartment, thus requiring NYCHA to make presumptions and use expensive and time-consuming lead-based paint protections during repairs. Now, NYCHA will be able to repair apartments where the repair area is negative for lead-based paint and do so faster and more cheaply.

The NYCHA public housing portfolio includes approximately 170,000 units. The 134,000 units that are included in the XRF testing initiative are pre-1978 units without a prior negative XRF test or a record of abatement.

NYCHA's current proactive testing initiative is designed with an abundance of caution and includes a broad range of developments. This includes developments previously designated exempt from lead requirements based on the random sampling methodology set forth in the HUD Guidelines for the Evaluation and Control of Lead-Based Paint Hazards in Housing. That random sampling was completed in the early 2000s, following HUD Chapter 7 guidelines for multi-unit testing.

The current XRF initiative will test every development built prior to 1978, even if that development was previously designated as exempt using the random sampling methodology. Developments were scheduled/prioritized based on the number of child-under-6 units in each development. All units in a pre-1978 development that have not yet received individual testing will receive individual unit-based testing, instead of a random sampling, through the XRF testing initiative. NYCHA's plan to proactively test these apartments goes above and beyond the requirements of federal and local law.

As of May 7, 2021, NYCHA has scheduled and attempted to inspect a total of 101,970 apartments, with 90,013 of those apartments having been completed. As a part of the protocol, NYCHA provides three notices to the tenants that an inspector is coming to perform XRF testing: a 2-week notice, a 5-day notice, and a 48-hour robocall. If a tenant will not be available for their appointment, the tenant can contact the property management office to reschedule. NYCHA is on track to schedule and attempt to inspect the remaining apartments in the XRF testing initiative in 2021.

The full interim XRF lead testing results are below:

Category (data as of May 7, 2021)	
# of Unit Test Results Received	66,546
<i>Positive</i>	22,919
<i>Negative</i>	43,627
# of Units Pending Results	23,467
Total Completed	90,013
Total Attempted	101,970
Total Remaining to Be Attempted	32,114
Total in XRF Universe	134,084

So far, as of May 4, 2021, NYCHA has received results for a total of 28,757 apartments across 56 developments for buildings that were previously thought to be negative based on the random sampling method. As of May 4, 2021, of the 28,757 apartments, 24,224 are negative under the federal standard and 4,533 are positive in buildings that were identified as being exempt.

When lead is identified in an apartment, NYCHA attempts to ensure that apartments are addressed according to the most current lead rules and policies. For any apartment with a child under 6 present, NYCHA will follow enhanced protocols set forth in its approved [Initial Lead Action Plan](#). These enhanced protocols will include two visual assessments per year in these apartments to guard against peeling paint. NYCHA also has begun planning for abatement in the apartments; before abatement is completed, any paint-disturbing work that needs to be done in apartments with three or more lead components will be performed by specially dedicated staff.

More details on this new program are included in Action 1 in the [NYCHA Initial Lead Action Plan](#).

As part of its lead testing protocol, NYCHA notifies residents of an apartment's test results. If a positive result is identified in a unit through XRF testing, a work order is automatically generated for abatement. A remediation work order is also automatically generated if the positive component is peeling and a corresponding dust wipe work order is also generated. Remediation work orders are completed within 21 days if a child under 6 resides in the unit and within 90 days for units without young children present.

NYCHA also publishes the results for each development's XRF inspections on its website (link below). You can search the results by the name of each development. Since the data on this website is refreshed on a bi-weekly basis, there may be some discrepancies with the numbers outlined.

[Lead-Based Testing Report: XRF Initiative](#)

NYCHA's lead hazard control program, along with the policies and programs included in NYCHA's Lead Action Plan, is a direct result of the 2019 HUD Agreement and reflects significant efforts to ensure compliance with all regulatory requirements.

NYCHA's efforts to comprehensively identify every apartment with lead-based paint will ultimately result in the full removal of lead paint from NYCHA apartments. The Authority looks forward to continuing to work with the Monitor, HUD, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, and other stakeholders to bring an end to the legacy of lead-based paint.