

Lead Poisoning

The concern about lead poisoning is mostly irrational paranoia steadily fueled by propaganda dispersed by companies that would like to have lead banned so you will be forced to switch to their more expensive alternatives.

Leaded gas was banned because it did produce fumes that could be inhaled. Lead was banned in paint because children ate it. Solder containing lead was banned for use in water lines because it got into the water we drank. Those were legitimate reasons for banning lead, but there are no legitimate reasons for banning it in stained glass use.

A few years ago, a story was being widely spread that handling lead could cause lead poisoning by the lead being absorbed through the pores of your skin. That's 100% bunk. Recently, a story was being distributed claiming that careful laboratory tests had confirmed that lead heated to 900 degrees could produce a vapor that could be inhaled. That created serious concern in the stained glass community because many soldering irons used for stained glass heat up past 1000 degrees. It took a while for the details of that "laboratory test" to come out. Everybody assumed they were suggesting that lead vaporization occurred at 900 degrees Fahrenheit. Those promoting the "safety" concerns purposefully neglected to mention that their tests were done at 900 degrees Celsius. Probably the only way to get stained glass solder to that temperature would be to put a roll of it in the bottom of a kiln, heat the kiln to its top temperature, open the kiln lid, hang your head over that heated kiln, and inhale deeply. After the doctors figured out how to repair a face that have been seared off, they might ask if the stupidity factor wasn't greater then the threat from lead poisoning. It would be appropriate for anyone that chose to do that to nominate them for the "Darwin Award" (a special award for people that have found a unique way to remove themselves from our species).

Lead will NOT absorb through the pores of your skin and it will NOT form a vapor at the temperatures used to melt solder. The only way to get lead poisoning is to ingest it. No problem – don't ingest it. Precautions against being harmed from working with lead are simple.

- Don't eat it.
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling it.
- Don't drop it on your foot.

Precautions against having your sense of security seriously misbalanced by the pure bunk propaganda being distributed are equally simple.

- Be skeptical about all warnings.
- Take the above precautions.