

Lead

Lead of Yore: Lead has been mined and used by mankind for 6,000 years. The ancient Egyptians were aware of lead's toxicity and used lead compounds for homicidal purposes. Classical Greeks weighted dice with lead and wrote insults and jokes about their Persian enemies on lead projectiles launched in battle. In Imperial Rome, lead was used to make water pipes, some of which are still in use. Roman wine-makers boiled grape juice in lead pots for preserving and sweetening the wine. Lead poisoning is believed to be a contributing factor to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. The Middle Ages introduced lead chastity belts and the sweetening of wines and ciders with lead acetate (sugar of lead).

Zeppelin: In late 1968, the first heavy-metal band was forming and also looking for a name. Keith Moon (drummer

for The Who) predicted that the new band would go down "like a lead balloon" while John Entwistle (bassist for The Who) thought it would be "more like a lead zeppelin." The name stuck, although Led Zeppelin's manager changed the spelling from *lead* to *led* to discourage "thick Americans" from mispronouncing it.

Beethoven: Ludwig van Beethoven's years of chronic illness may have been caused by lead poisoning. Chemical analysis of 8 strands of his hair showed lead concentrations 100 times greater than the levels of lead found in today's population. The high lead levels would have had an impact on his personality and may have contributed to his death. His exposure most likely came as an adult, because his intellect

was not impaired. The source of the lead remains unknown.

Big Apple: Rudy Giuliani often reminds people about his crime-fighting tenure as mayor of New York (1994-2001). Although crime fell dramatically in the city during Giuliani's term, recent research suggests that most of the decline was due to earlier government efforts to reduce lead poisoning. The studies link children's exposure to lead with violent behavior later in their lives. The research was conducted in nine countries with similar results.



Lead pipes in Roman bath house Bath, England

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Did you Know?

- The word plumbing comes from the Latin *plumbum* (meaning lead). Pb is the chemical symbol for lead.
- Punishment for crimes in Greek and Roman times included a lifetime of labor in the lead mines with large pieces of lead strapped to the convict's body.
- Stardust was blamed for (lead) poisoning from contaminated cider in Devonshire, England (1767).

Lead Moments in History

1761: Ben Franklin invents the glass harmonica. Musicians complain of "mental anguish" from the leaded glass in the instrument.

1815: President Andrew Jackson's practice of taking baths in lead acetate (sugar of lead) may

have contributed to his lead poisoning. He also carried 2 lead bullets in his body (a result of his tendency to settle disputes with guns).

1926: Annie Oakley, one of the greatest sharpshooters of all time, dies at the age of 66. It is

believed that lead poisoning, brought on by years of handling lead shot, was the ultimate cause of her death.

1962: Lead (a robot) is introduced as a character in Metal Men Comics. He is described as "slow-witted and loyal."

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Top 10 Rejected New Jersey State Slogans

- 10 What happens in Jersey, stays buried in Jersey
- 9 A 55-gallon drum of fun!
- 8 At least it's not Delaware
- 7 Now with 10% less toxic waste
- 6 Our squirrels are lead-enriched (see story below)
- 5 Not dense, just densely populated
- 4 Pick up a complimentary drum on your way out
- 3 Come glow with us
- 2 We'll tax the crap out of you
- 1 It always smells like this (see photo at left)

Enviro-quote: "Give a man a fish and he can eat for a day. But teach a man to fish, and he'll be dead of mercury poisoning inside of three years" - Charles Haas

No Squirrel for You

Squirrel is off the menu for residents and hunters in the area around Ringwood State Park in northern New Jersey after lead-contaminated squirrels, voles, shrews and other small mammals were found in the area. Residents of Ring-

wood, New Jersey were advised not to eat squirrel more than twice a week (no doubt putting a crimp in sales at the local *Squirrel King* fast food restaurant).



Initially the EPA was "not making any recommendations" about a hunting advisory. In response to residents and hunters worried about consuming lead-contaminated animals, an EPA spokesman said "This is a personal decision."

Lead in the small animals was found as high as 292 parts per million. While the EPA and FDA have no standard for lead-contaminated meat, the FDA safety level for lead in candy eaten by children is 0.1 parts per million. Even in small amounts, lead can harm the nervous system, kidneys, red blood cell production and can affect reproduction and development.

Residents and environmental activists believe the lead comes from paint sludge dumped in the area by Ford Motor Com-

pany during the 1960's and 1970's, from its former auto manufacturing plant in Mahwah, New Jersey. Ford is removing thousands of tons of waste from a 500-acre former iron mining property in the Ringwood area.

After an initial cleanup, the EPA declared the Ford site clean and removed it from the list of Superfund sites in 1994. The EPA relied on Ford's assurances that the contamination had been removed. However, the site was recently reinstated to the Federal Superfund list after multiple cleanups failed to remove all the paint sludge. Since December 2004, Ford has removed 20,000 tons of paint sludge and contaminated soil from areas along a hiking trail in Ringwood State Park.