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**ATTORNEY GENERAL AND BURLINGTON LANDLORD WORK
TO UPGRADE RENTALS**

The State of Vermont entered into an agreement with William Bissonette, a Burlington area landlord, to eliminate many lead hazards in 17 of his rental properties. With the help of the Burlington Lead Program, Bissonette will replace old windows and doors, and take other steps to eliminate lead in the rental housing, rather than merely perform the essential maintenance that the Vermont lead law requires. “We would much prefer to work with landlords rather than file enforcement actions. We applaud Bill Bissonette's steps to provide rentals where lead has been eliminated, not just covered up.” said Attorney General William H. Sorrell.

Lead-based paint in housing is the primary cause of childhood lead poisoning, which can cause permanent adverse health effects including decreases in IQ. Young children are prone to putting their fingers, toys and other objects in their mouths, leading to the ingestion of lead dust or paint chips. Lead paint chips have a sweet taste. Lead dust is created when windows and doors are moved, or people walk across a floor that was painted or varnished with materials containing lead. Dirt near older housing or roads can still contain lead from the days when paint and gasoline contained lead. Consequently, children are more likely to have lead in their blood in the summer than in the winter.

Vermont's lead laws require that essential maintenance practices (known as EMPs) be performed in all pre-1978 rental housing. However, EMPs are just a temporary solution for reducing lead exposure. Vermonters are far better protected if building components that produce lead dust, such as windows, doors, and wood siding, are replaced or permanently covered.

"Bissonette Properties is very pleased to have been able to develop a win-win plan with the Burlington Lead Program and the Attorney General's Office," said William Bissonette. "We would not have been able to plan such a comprehensive goal without the financial support the Burlington Lead Program is providing. I strongly recommend Burlington area landlords with questions about lead in their property contact the program."

The agreement between the State of Vermont and Bissonette (called an "Assurance of Discontinuance") requires that Bissonette enroll 17 identified properties in the Burlington Lead Program and that all work at the properties be completed by September 1, 2009. Priority will be given to the work at rental properties with children and/or vacant units. A penalty of at least \$24,000.00 will be waived by the State if Bissonette completes the work at the properties on the agreed schedule.

"Over the last 5 years, the Burlington Lead Program has made over 120 homes and apartments safe from lead paint hazards and we have trained hundreds of rental property owners and managers in lead-safe housing maintenance. Mr. Bissonette stands out as a leader among rental property owners for going above and beyond the basic requirements of State lead law," said Brian Pine, Assistant Director for Housing for the City of Burlington. He added, "Working together, we will create lead-safe housing for about 40 households in Burlington. Hopefully, many other rental property owners will follow his example."

For copies of court documents in recent enforcement cases relating to lead and links to a video and written information concerning the duties of owners and managers of pre-1978 rental housing, see the Attorney General's website at: www.atg.state.vt.us and click on the "Lead" link. For more information on the Burlington Lead Program, call the program at 802-865-LEAD (5323) or visit the website of the City of Burlington Community and Economic Development Office's Housing Division at: www.cedoburlington.org/housing/housing_main.htm