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BALTIMORE CITY LANDLORD PLEADS GUILTY TO LEAD PAINT VIOLATIONS IN
RENTAL PROPERTIES HE OWNS AND MANAGES

Previously Cited by the State for Numerous Lead Paint Violations and
Documented Children with Elevated Lead Blood Levels Living in His
Properties

Baltimore, Maryland - Cephus Murrell, age 68, of Catonsville, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to three misdemeanor counts of violating the Toxic Substances Control Act, in connection with improper lead paint abatement at rental properties owned and managed by Murrell, as well as failure to disclose to tenants the presence of documented lead-based paint hazards. Murrell owns and manages approximately 175 rental housing units throughout Baltimore.

The guilty plea was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Acting Special Agent in Charge Christian Spangenberg of Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division; Secretary Robert M. Summers of the Maryland Department of the Environment; and Maryland Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler.

"Cephus Murrell placed Baltimore children at risk of permanent injuries by violating federal law and ignoring repeated orders to comply with lead paint regulations," said U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. "It is unacceptable in 2011 for pregnant women and children to be exposed to lead paint in violation of the law."

According to Murrell's plea agreement, he is the president and owner of C. Murrell Business Consultants, Inc., through which Murrell owns and manages approximately 68 rental properties with 175 rental housing units throughout Baltimore. All of these properties were built before 1978 and are subject to federal, state and local laws and regulations pertaining to the risks associated with lead-paint exposure. Murrell has been a landlord in Baltimore since about 1974. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) or its predecessor agencies have conducted environmental lead inspections for many years at properties owned by Murrell after discovering that children with elevated lead blood levels ("EBLs") were living there. These inspections identified numerous lead hazards in tenants' homes. The

State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore have issued more than 20 Notices of Violation and compliance orders against Murrell and/or his company, C. Murrell Business Consultants, for lead-based paint violations, including situations in which a child with an Elevated Blood Lead Level was documented as living in a rental property leased by Murrell. Additionally, Murrell entered into a number of Consent Decrees with the State and City of Baltimore designed to achieve compliance with applicable lead requirements.

According to his guilty plea, on September 15, 2010, Murrell had workers conduct lead-paint abatement work at one of his apartments, located on Frederick Avenue in Baltimore, while one of the apartment tenants and his children were present on site, in violation of the lead-paint abatement regulations. In addition, Murrell provided MDE with a Project Notification Form for this project in which he falsely stated that a particular supervisor would be on site at the particular place and date, when in fact no supervisor was on site, also in violation of the lead-paint abatement regulations. Murrell admits that there were several instances in which he falsely certified that workers would be conducting lead abatement work and that a particular supervisor would be on site to supervise the work, when in fact, no supervisor was on site. For example, Murrell had notified MDE that he would be conducting abatement work on August 31, 2010, and that a specific individual would be supervising it. When officials from MDE visited the apartment on that date they found workers conducting abatement work with no supervisor on site. The alleged supervisor was, in fact, out of town on travel.

Finally, Murrell admits that he and his company failed to disclose to tenants the presence of documented lead-based paint hazards when they rented units he owned and managed. Many of these units had a history of lead-based paint problems that had been documented by MDE. Despite these findings and prior enforcement actions by the State and municipal agencies, Murrell did not provide tenants with the required Lead-Based Paint Notification Disclosure Form and failed to: (a) give prospective tenants an EPA-approved information pamphlet on identifying and controlling lead-based paint hazards; (b) disclose to prospective tenants any known information concerning lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards, the location of those hazards, and the condition of the relevant surfaces; (c) provide prospective tenants with any records and reports on lead-based paint and/or lead-based paint hazards; and (d) include an attachment to the lease (or to insert relevant language in the lease itself) which provides a Lead Warning Statement and confirms that the landlord has complied with all notification requirements.

Murrell faces a maximum penalty of one year in prison and a fine of \$100,000 or not more than \$25,000 for each day of violation, whichever is greater, on each of the three counts. U.S. District

Judge Benson E. Legg, has scheduled sentencing for November 4, 2011 at 3:00 p.m.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein commended EPA's Criminal Investigation Division, MDE, and the Maryland Attorney General's Office for their work in the investigation. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant United States Attorney P. Michael Cunningham, who is prosecuting the case.
