



Press Release

**For More Information Contact:
Kurt Koopmann
Public Information Officer
Galveston County Health District
(409) 938-2211 – Office
(409) 392-0007 - Cell
kkoopman@gchd.org**

September 5, 2008

New equipment to be used in fight against lead poisoning

Galveston County and Cities – In a first for the Galveston County Health District, a next-generation lead detecting “gun” is the newest tool in the ongoing battle against lead poisoning and contamination among local children.

Lead poisoning and how it impacts children has been very much in the news recently. As a result the Galveston County Childhood Lead Task Force was formed to address the issue. Members hope they will be able to develop a model sustainable lead poisoning prevention program that will help protect children and others from lead poisoning.

Now local official's efforts to reduce childhood lead levels have received a boost in the form of a grant from the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund that has allowed the Galveston County Health District to purchase an X-Ray Fluorescence Machine (XRF). An XRF is used to check many surfaces for the presence of lead paint. Much like an x-ray machine it can penetrate through several layers of paint and let someone know if lead paint is present.

The XRF testing along with a visual inspection will provide relevant information for a family to make informed decisions on how to reduce the threat of lead poisoning through sound lead remediation practices.

“We are so thankful for the generous support of the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund,” says Dr. Mark Guidry, Galveston County Health Authority and also co-

chair of the task force. "Being able to purchase the XRF will greatly improve our ability to identify sources of lead in the community and to take action to protect the health of children by educating parents and homeowners and linking them to safe and available avenues for making homes healthier for kids."

Plans are to use the XRF equipment not only in homes but also city parks and other areas where children may spend time. Lead poisoning has been widely recognized as the No. 1 environmental health threat to children.

Before the dangers of lead were known it was used in many products, including paint. Lead does not break down naturally and can remain a problem until it is removed. Lead may be found in the dust, paint, or soil in and around homes.

According to county reports, there are many high-lead risk zones largely because of the age of the homes. Houses built before 1978 are much more likely to contain lead paint.

"Having the XRF equipment," Guidry says, "is one big step toward our longer term goals of protecting kids from lead poisoning, promoting healthy homes, and building a model prevention program in Galveston County. Identifying and eliminating lead anywhere in the environment prevents kids from being poisoned in the future."

-30-

[Photo caption] *GCHD Lead Assessor Marco Cardenas demonstrates use of XRF lead detecting equipment purchased with funds from the Harris and Eliza Kempner fund.*