

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Liability Insurance Summary Fact Sheet**

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## FACT SHEET

### Liability Insurance Summary

There are three types of liability insurance that individuals and firms involved in residential renovation, remodeling and painting should consider when evaluating their insurance needs:

- Commercial General Liability (CGL);
- Professional liability errors and omissions (E&O); and
- Pollution liability.

In addition, there are two coverage “triggers” in liability insurance policies:

- Occurrence-based; and
- Claims-made.

This document discusses the types of insurance and policy coverage triggers, and then provides a list of questions to consider when deciding what type of insurance to purchase.

### **Types of Insurance**

**Commercial General Liability Insurance.** CGL policies are typically carried by contractors and contracting firms. They cover claims arising from business premises liability exposures, on-site contracting operations liability, liability assumed in a construction contract, liability arising out of the work performed by hired independent contractors, liability arising out of products that are manufactured, sold or installed, and liability arising out completed work or projects.

**Professional Liability Errors and Omissions Insurance.** E&O policies are usually carried by those persons and firms that render “professional services,” such as architects, engineers, designers, management planners, risk assessors, lead paint inspectors and others that design and write specifications for renovation, remodeling and painting projects. These policies cover liability that results from providing or failing to provide such professional services.

Under the law, “professionals” are held to a higher standard of care than laymen, and most CGL policies have exclusions for claims that result from the performance, or failure, of the professional service. E&O policies cover only the professional act itself; therefore, they cover a far narrower range of potential claims than CGL policies. CGL coverage protects contractors from liability due to accidents while E&O coverage protects professionals from liability that results from giving advice or providing other professional services. For example, a lead inspector who drops a flashlight onto and injures a passing tenant will be covered by CGL insurance if a claim is brought. If the lead inspector fails to identify lead-containing materials and there is a resulting claim, he or she will be covered by E&O

insurance. An architect who designs a defective containment scaffold that collapses would be covered by E&O. If a worker incorrectly assembles a properly designed scaffold, any resulting accidents would be covered by CGL.

**Pollution Liability Insurance.** Standard CGL and E&O insurance almost always contains a “pollution exclusion” or other clause that excludes coverage for liability caused by “pollution.” To the extent that residential renovation, remodeling and painting projects generate lead-related “pollutants” or “contaminants,” CGL and E&O policies may not cover any resulting claims. Therefore, it may also be necessary to consider acquiring special pollution liability insurance and/or a CGL or E&O policy that has been specifically written or endorsed to include coverage of claims and suits for bodily injury and property damage contamination caused by lead.

### **Occurrence-based Versus Claims-made Insurance**

Liability insurance policies are written as either “occurrence-based” or “claims-made.” An **occurrence-based** policy is one that covers claims that result from an accident that occurs during the term of the insurance policy, regardless of how long it takes for the claim to be made. It does not matter if the policy expired years before the claim finally arises; as long as the accident or exposure to injurious conditions or substances happened or “occurred” during the policy term, the resulting claim will be covered by the insurance. Some occurrence-based policies may include **sunset clauses**. A sunset clause states that the coverage lasts for a limited time beyond the expiration date of the policy. For example, if a policy has a sunset clause after five years, and expires on December 31, 2001, then any claims made after December 21, 2006 will not be covered. These clauses are not very prevalent although they sometimes appear in pollution liability policies.

A **claims-made** policy covers a claim for an accident, as long as both the accident and the claim take place while the policy is in force. The policyholder must have a claims-made policy in effect when the claim is first made against the policyholder and reported to the insurance company in order to have coverage. If the policy has expired or been canceled after the accident but before the claim comes in, the policyholder has no insurance coverage. Most claims-made policies include a **retroactive or retro-date clause**. The retroactive clause states that the policy will not cover any claims resulting from accidents that happened more than a specified amount of time before the inception date of the policy.

Insurance companies may be willing to modify insurance policy provisions during negotiations and before policy inception. Some insurers offering occurrence-based insurance will drop or extend the periods of sunset clauses prior to writing the policy. Some insurers offering claims-made insurance can be persuaded to push the retro-date back to an earlier time, so that the policyholder will be covered for all claims arising from

the insured's previous activities. Also, most insurers now provide or offer **extended discovery periods** endorsements for claims-made policies. For an additional premium, the policyholder gains an extension of time during which to file claims after the policy expires, as long as the accident occurred during a time period covered by the expiring policy. Extended discovery periods of one year are common. Longer periods are less common.

Generally, most CGL policies are occurrence-based while most E&O policies are claims-made.

### **Financial Viability of Insurers**

Regulation of insurance is left to the states and, depending on the structure of insurance companies and the types of insurance coverage being offered, that regulation and financial oversight might be extensive, limited or non-existent. Pre-approval of policy forms and rates, and periodic financial and operational audits may or may not be required. However, most all insurance companies have some minimum capitalization requirements before they can write any business. Yearly financial statements should be available that provide details on the company's financial viability.

Additionally, there are independent commercial rating services that report on the insurance company's relative financial strength, balance sheet, profit and loss statement, investments, financial reserves to pay for claims, claims payment history, management expertise and lines of business written. These services include A. M. Best Company and Moody's. The reports published by A. M. Best and Moody's provide another source of information on insurers' financial viability and stability.

### **Insurance Availability**

CGL and E&O policies are widely available in the commercial insurance market, but lead-specific and other pollution liability policies are not. Further, those pollution liability policies currently available have high minimum premiums and vary in terms of the coverage provided. This coverage is often very narrowly written and may have a number of conditions and exclusions that will limit applicability to certain claim and/or suit situations.

### **Questions to Ask When Choosing Insurance**

To determine what types of insurance are appropriate for residential renovation, remodeling and painting projects and whether a particular insurer is financially viable and stable, individuals and firms engaged in this work should consult with their insurance agent or broker, professional risk manager and/or attorney. Questions that should be asked and answered include the following:

1. Is CGL insurance adequate for the types of claims exposures my work will create?

2. Does my work specifically include providing professional services for which E&O insurance is intended?
3. Does my existing insurance cover “bodily injury” or “property damage” caused by exposure to lead?
4. Will I be working in properties that might contain lead-based paint and result in my work generating lead contamination and exposure?
5. Is my exposure to lead-specific or pollution-related claims so small as to eliminate the need for special pollution liability insurance? How often will painted surfaces and components in properties where I work be tested for lead-based paint?
6. If I choose not to purchase CGL, E&O or special pollution liability insurance policies that cover lead liability claims, will it limit my ability to bid on projects or to be deemed acceptable for some residential renovation, remodeling or painting projects? If so, is that acceptable to me?
7. If I choose not to purchase CGL, E&O and/or special pollution liability insurance policies that cover lead liability, can I afford to bear the out-of-pocket cost and responsibility of handling, investigating, defending and paying for any claims or suits against me?
8. For those insurance policies that I am considering, what are the financial ratings of the insurers under consideration, as determined by independent insurance company rating services such as the A. M. Best Company and Moody’s? Have any state insurance departments placed such insurers on a financial “watch” list or under supervision?
9. For those insurance policies that I am considering, are there any policy conditions or exclusions that would limit coverage of a claim or law suit?