

Newsbriefs

GET THE LEAD OUT:



The Los Angeles City Council has adopted a pilot program that will target the abatement of lead-based paint in some of the oldest neighborhoods in the City.

The program is the result of state legislation effective January that redefines the State Housing Code so that lead dust and lead-based paint deterioration is not exclusively a health concern, but a housing violation as well. The change in the code now gives the authority to local zoning officials to mandate safe abatement. Los Angeles will be the first City in the State to implement the new law.

"The days when we have to wait for a child to become ill with lead poisoning before we could act are over," Councilmember Ed Reyes said. "Before this law took effect, we could only suggest to property owners how to

abate exposed lead-based paint. That will no longer be the case."

Focusing on parts of the city with some of the oldest housing stock, the joint effort will include the County Health Department, the City's Housing Department as well as a local non-profit who will reach out to residents to explain the program. Under the pilot, the Health Department will follow-up on referrals from the city, take appropriate samples and act as expert witnesses in any City prosecution.

"We have been preparing for this pilot since October, and we were not content on waiting for the state to issue its guidelines on implementation," Reyes said. "Los Angeles is way ahead of the curve on this issue, and I know the enforcement will make a difference."

Los Angeles will incorporate the inspection of lead based paint through its systematic code enforcement program (SCEP), which routinely inspects housing units throughout the City. Under the new law, the city will now have the authority to issue work stoppage orders for non-compliance.

"The reason SCEP is so important is that often tenants don't know about the lead in



their own houses," he said. "SCEP will identify the lead as a matter of routine."

Because of necessary training, the program is expected to take effect within the next two months. ■

CHECKING OUT THE CHECKERS:

Troubled by revelations that hundreds of airport employees have been terminated due to the results of City ordered background checks, Councilmember Jack Weiss has called for an evaluation of the Transportation Safety Administration's (TSA's) efforts to improve employee security and ongoing safety concerns.

"Every day thousands of airport passengers rely on the TSA to guarantee that the employees who handle baggage and conduct passenger screenings can be trusted to perform their jobs in the safest manner," Weiss said. "The failure of TSA to catch some of the red flags in these employees' backgrounds is a real security risk for the City and the nation."

Following fingerprinting and background checks of all employees of Los Angeles International (LAX) and Ontario Airports, the City disqualified 285 screeners for various forms of noncompliance, substantially more than TSA had disqualified.

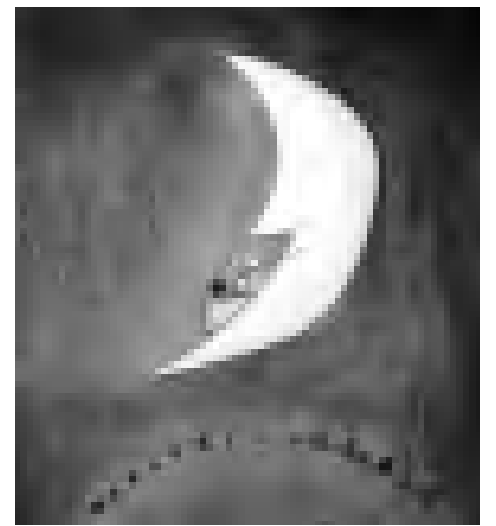
Weiss' measure requests that LAX officials brief the City Council on the background

identified serious issues that had not been raised by the TSA's background checks, remedial measures that will be implemented to ensure that there is no recurrence of this security lapse, as well as the impact of TSA cut-backs on the number of personnel assigned to LAX airport operations.

"LAX has been a terrorist target in the past, and it could be a target again," Weiss said. "We have made protecting airline passengers and our communities a City priority, and the TSA must rise to the occasion to do their part as well."

In February 2002, Weiss led the City Council to approve a screening process for airport employees that includes a background check, fingerprinting and a comprehensive badge system to improve the airports' ability to ensure the security of terminals, airfields and airplanes. ■

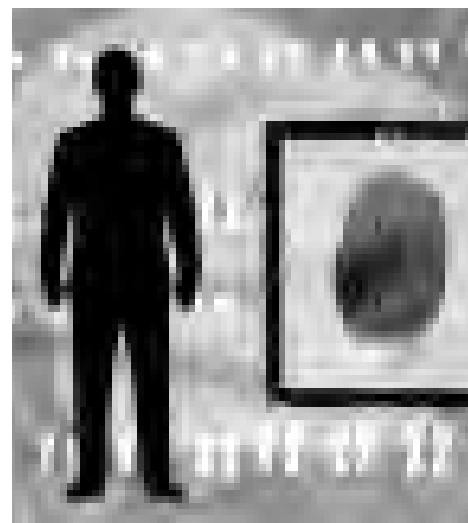
WORKING OVERTIME:



Newly elected Councilmember Greig Smith is adding evening and weekend hours for his District Office in Northridge. "It is time to make local government more accessible," he said. "My goal is to increase the availability of City services to the greatest possible number of constituents and extending our office hours is an important step in that direction."

The Councilman's District Office will remain open until 8 p.m. every Wednesday evening, and it will be open Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Constituents will be able to request services, file complaints and speak with a deputy regarding community concerns and issues of interest.

The District office is at 18917 Nordhoff St., Suite 18, Northridge. The phone number is (818) 886-5210. ■



checks that were conducted on employees, including the number of cases in which the airport's fingerprint-based background checks

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