



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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June 2, 2016

Please see the following memo and attached information issued by the Commissioner to all Public, Private and Charter School administrators:

Dear Colleagues:

Following reports of the discovery of high levels of lead in some schools across the nation, we have coordinated this outreach with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to bring to your attention information and resources available to you and your school community. We are pleased that Judith Enck, the Regional Administrator for the EPA has made the Region 2 office available to provide technical assistance, training opportunities, and guidance to help us and school districts navigate this important issue. We encourage you to contact the EPA Region 2 office, your local health department or BOCES staff with additional inquiries.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for everything you do for our students.

Sincerely,

*MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner of Education*



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 2

290 BROADWAY

NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

May 25, 2016

RE: Reducing Lead in Drinking Water - Resources for Schools

Dear Superintendent:

The mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect public health and the environment, and one of our highest priorities is protecting the health of children where they live, learn and play. The safety of the drinking water that our children consume at their schools has become an important focus and a priority I'm sure we share. Lead plumbing components are still a concern in many of New York schools, especially those constructed before 1986. We must work together to address this issue, and I'm asking you to join me in taking action to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water in schools.

There is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Researchers have found that children can have health effects when exposed to even the lowest levels of lead, so it is critical to prevent exposure. Infants, young children and pregnant women are at greatest risk. Health effects can include damage to the brain and kidneys, reduced IQ and other behavioral and neurological impairments. The effects of lead have been linked to reduced performance in schools which compounds the disadvantages for children. Ensuring lead-free drinking water in schools helps not only the at-risk child but the entire school community.

Lead can enter drinking water when service pipes that contain lead corrode, especially where the water sits for extended periods and has high acidity or low mineral content that corrodes pipes and fixtures. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures with lead solder, from which significant amounts of lead can enter into the water, especially hot water. It is also important to recognize all the ways a child can be exposed to lead. Children are exposed to lead in paint, dust, soil, air, and food, as well as drinking water. EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

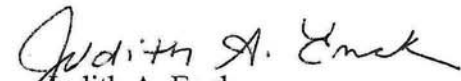
Unless your school district is [regulated as a public water supply](#) under EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act, you are not required to test your drinking water and report results to the State.

However, we strongly encourage you to take advantage of EPA's voluntary program that guides schools and districts through the process of sampling, and communicating the results and remediating any lead exceedances in a timely manner. EPA has a helpful program called [3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools, Revised Technical Guidance](#), and districts have used it successfully to address lead in drinking water for the past ten years. 3Ts stands for Training, Testing and Telling, and the Guidance is accompanied by an [online Toolkit](#) that helps districts with all aspects of the program. The Guidance covers critical details such as developing a plumbing profile for your facility, sampling and collection procedures, short term and permanent remedies if lead is found, and techniques for disseminating public information and effective communication strategies.

EPA Region 2 is available to provide technical assistance to school districts. EPA Region 2 will be providing training opportunities on the 3Ts program and guidance in the coming months and we will notify you of those as they become available.

For more information about trainings or general questions about reducing environmental contaminants in your schools, please contact the EPA Region 2 Children's Environmental Health and Schools Coordinator, Rebecca Ofrane at (212)-637-4302 or Ofrane.Rebecca@epa.gov. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Judith A. Enck
Regional Administrator

Attached: Factsheet – 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools (2p)

3Ts for Reducing Lead

in Drinking Water in Schools

Nearly 56 million Americans, including 53 million children, spend their days in schools. School officials need to know if the drinking water students, teachers, and staff consume contains elevated levels of lead because exposure to lead can cause serious health problems, particularly for young children. To help schools safeguard their occupants' health, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed the *3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools: Revised Technical Guidance*. It provides the information schools need to:

- ▶ Identify potential sources of lead in their facilities,
- ▶ Monitor school drinking water for elevated lead levels,
- ▶ Resolve problems if elevated lead levels are found, and
- ▶ Communicate about their lead control programs.

Although public water systems that supply water to most schools may meet EPA's lead standards, lead can still get into school drinking water. As water moves through a school's plumbing system, lead can leach into the drinking water from plumbing materials and fixtures that contain lead. Testing is the best way for schools to know if there are elevated levels of lead in a facility's drinking water.

Ensuring that the water provided in your school is safe for children to drink is a fundamental responsibility. In addition to the health advantages, schools that voluntarily test drinking water and make information about their program available to the public will enjoy the following benefits:

- ▶ Enhanced credibility
- ▶ Positive publicity
- ▶ Parental and community support
- ▶ Stature as a standard-setting "best practices" facility

Health Effects of Exposure to Lead

Infants and children exposed to lead can experience:

- ▶ Delays in physical and mental development
- ▶ Lower IQ levels
- ▶ Reduced attention span
- ▶ Learning disabilities
- ▶ Hearing loss
- ▶ Hyperactivity
- ▶ Poor classroom performance



3Ts of Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools

EPA developed the 3Ts (Training, Testing, and Telling) to help schools implement simple strategies for managing the health risks of lead in school drinking water.

- ▶ **Training** school officials to raise awareness of the potential occurrences, causes, and health effects of lead in drinking water; assist school officials in identifying potential areas where elevated lead may occur; and establish a testing plan to identify and prioritize testing sites.
- ▶ **Testing** drinking water in schools to identify potential problems and take corrective actions as necessary.
- ▶ **Telling** students, parents, staff, and the larger community about monitoring programs, potential risks, the results of testing, and remediation actions.

DOWNLOAD *The 3Ts For Reducing Lead In Drinking Water In Schools: Revised Technical Guidance*
www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-drinking-water-schools-and-child-care-facilities
or order a free copy by calling the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.



Sources of Lead Exposure

Lead is distributed in the environment by natural and human-made activity. (Past human activities are the major source of lead in the environment.)

Possible sources of lead include:

- ▶ **Lead-based paint** that can flake off into soil, window sills, or floors
- ▶ **Lead in the air** from industrial activities
- ▶ **Dust and soil** from roadways and streets where automobiles, which used leaded gas, travelled
- ▶ **Lead dust** brought home by industrial workers on their clothes and shoes
- ▶ **Lead in water** from the corrosion of plumbing products containing lead

Although most lead exposure occurs when people eat paint chips and inhale dust, EPA estimates that 10 to 20 percent of human exposure to lead may come from lead in drinking water.

Potential Sources of Lead In Drinking Water

- ▶ Lead solder
- ▶ Lead pipe and pipe fittings
- ▶ Fixtures, valves, meters and other system components containing brass
- ▶ Sediments

Start Your Lead in Drinking Water Control Program Today

The first step to implementing a successful lead control program is to read the recommendations found in the *3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools: Revised Technical Guidance*. Schools can follow the straightforward guidance found in the 3Ts to:

- ▶ **Collect information on school drinking water and identify assistance to help implement a school lead control program.** The 3Ts provides tips on finding past testing results; asking water utilities for help or financial assistance; reaching out to state drinking water programs for support; and evaluating existing resources.
- ▶ **Develop a plumbing profile.** A plumbing profile helps schools identify potential problem areas and assess factors that contribute to lead problems. Lead contamination may not occur uniformly throughout a building and the 3Ts describes various factors that affect the likelihood of lead contamination in order to identify those areas as priorities for testing. Chapter 3 of the guidance provides tips on developing a school plumbing profile.
- ▶ **Develop a drinking water testing plan.** The results of a plumbing profile will help schools create their testing plans. Key issues to consider include who will be in charge of the effort; who will collect and analyze the samples and maintain records; and where samples will be taken. Chapter 3 of the guidance helps schools answer these questions and suggests possible sources of assistance for school testing efforts.
- ▶ **Test the facilities' drinking water for lead.** EPA recommends a two-step sampling process to test for lead in drinking water. The two-staged process will help schools determine if particular outlets have elevated lead levels *and* locate the source of the problem. The recommended testing plan allows schools to determine if the source of lead is at the sampled outlet or within the facility's interior plumbing. Schools will find detailed and easy-to-follow instructions on testing for lead in water in Chapter 4.
- ▶ **Correct problems when elevated lead levels are found.** Addressing elevated lead levels in school drinking water typically requires temporary and permanent solutions. Chapter 5 recommends short-term solutions to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water in schools and provides suggestions for permanent solutions, such as replacing pipes, fixtures, or faucets containing lead with lead-free alternatives.
- ▶ **Communicate with the school community about a school lead control program.** Lead is a serious public health risk and monitoring school drinking water for lead is one important way schools can protect their community's health. Schools will benefit if they communicate about their lead monitoring program with students, teachers, staff, parents, and other members of the school community. Chapter 6 of the guidance provides communication strategies and sample materials schools can use.



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