



May 2021

## **NOTICE TO PARENTS, GUARDIANS, and STAFF Lead Testing of School Drinking Water**

Safe and healthy school environments can foster healthy and successful children. To protect public health, the Public Health Law and New York State Health Department (NYSDOH) regulations require that all public schools and boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES) test lead levels in water from every outlet that is being used, or could potentially be used, for drinking or cooking. If lead is found at any water outlet at levels above 15 parts per billion (ppb), which is equal to 15 micrograms per liter ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ ), the NYSDOH requires that the school take action to reduce the exposure to lead.

### **What is first draw testing of school drinking water for lead?**

The “on-again, off-again” nature of water use at most schools can raise lead levels in school drinking water. Water that remains in pipes overnight, over a weekend, or over vacation periods stays in contact with lead pipes or lead solder and, as a result, could contain higher levels of lead. This is why schools are required to collect a sample after the water has been sitting in the plumbing system for a certain period of time. This “first draw” sample is likely to show higher levels of lead for that outlet than what you would see if you sampled after using the water continuously. However, even if the first draw sample does not reflect what you would see with continuous usage, it is still important because it can identify outlets that have elevated lead levels.

### **What are the results of the first draw testing?**

Water sampling results are now beginning to come back to the district. The first results showed elevated levels of lead in some fixtures. The fixtures that exceeded the new standards: 2 drinking fountains and 18 handwashing sinks in the Junior/Senior High School (testing done on 3/24/21); 4 handwashing sinks in Morse Elementary (testing done on 3/26/21); 3 handwashing sinks in Riccardi Elementary (testing done on 3/26/21). The drinking fountains have not been in use this school year due to COVID restrictions. These fixtures are all marked with a sign indicating the water is not to be used for drinking. Fixtures that tested below the action level remain in service with no restrictions.

### **What is being done in response to the results?**

We want to reassure you that the district is following all New York State Health Department guidelines for both notification and correction of any identified concerns. All sources of elevated levels at our schools will be identified, marked, and taken out of service in anticipation of immediate repair or replacement of all identified fixtures. The district will also communicate all results as they become available via our website at [www.saugerties.k12.ny.us](http://www.saugerties.k12.ny.us) in order to keep a transparent review of water testing results for our district. After each school vacation we will flush all fixtures throughout the district. We wish to reassure you that the district and its maintenance staff take this new standard seriously and are moving quickly to remedy areas of concern.

Once any identified fixtures have been replaced or repaired, the district will retest and keep them out of use until the results from the NYS Department of Health are returned to the district confirming the correction on the initial test. We will do everything within our power to expedite this second water test and get it returned to the district as soon as possible.

### **What are the health effects of lead?**

Lead is a metal that can harm children and adults when it gets into their bodies. Lead is a known neurotoxin, particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of children under 6 years old. Lead can harm a young child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead exposure during pregnancy may contribute to low birth weight and developmental delays in infants. There are many sources of lead exposure in the environment, and it is important to reduce all lead exposures as much as possible. Water testing helps identify and correct possible sources of lead that contribute to exposure from drinking water.

### **What are the other sources of lead exposure?**

Lead is a metal that has been used for centuries for many purposes, resulting in widespread distribution in the environment. Major sources of lead exposure include lead-based paint in older housing, and lead that built up over decades in soil and dust due to historical use of lead in gasoline, paint, and manufacturing. Lead can also be found in a number of consumer products, including certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, foods, plumbing materials, and cosmetics. Lead seldom occurs naturally in water supplies but drinking water could become a possible source of lead exposure if the building's plumbing contains lead. The primary source of lead exposure for most children with elevated blood-lead levels is lead-based paint.

### **Should your child be tested for lead?**

The risk to an individual child from past exposure to elevated lead in drinking water depends on many factors; for example, a child's age, weight, amount of water consumed, and the amount of lead in the water. Children may also be exposed to other significant sources of lead including paint, soil and dust. Since blood lead testing is the only way to determine a child's blood lead level, parents should discuss their child's health history with their child's physician to determine if blood lead testing is appropriate. Pregnant women or women of childbearing age should also consider discussing this matter with their physician.

## **Additional Resources**

**For information about lead in school drinking water, go to:**

[http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/lead/lead\\_testing\\_of\\_school\\_drinking\\_water.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/lead/lead_testing_of_school_drinking_water.htm)

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/LeadTestinginSchoolDrinkingWater.html>

**For information about NYS Department of Health Lead Poisoning Prevention, go to:** <http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/>

**For more information on blood lead testing and ways to reduce your child's risk of exposure to lead, see "What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means":** <http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2526/> (available in ten languages).