



Washington
State
Department
of Health

Lead in School Drinking Water

To address the concerns about lead in drinking water, and to reduce children's overall exposure to lead in the environment, in 2021, the Legislature passed, and governor signed [Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill \(E2SHB\) 1139 \(PDF\)](#). In passing the bill, the Legislature follows the advice of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Environmental Protection Agency that [there is no known safe level of lead in a child's blood](#). Even low levels of lead exposure can cause permanent cognitive, academic, and behavioral difficulties in children.

E2SHB 1139, now [Chapters 43.70.830 \(PDF\), 43.70.835 \(PDF\), 43.70.840 \(PDF\), 43.70.845 \(PDF\), 28A.210.410 RCW \(PDF\)](#) requires that drinking water outlets in school buildings built, or with all plumbing replaced, before 2016 be tested for the presence and level of lead contamination by June 30, 2026, and every five years thereafter. In addition, schools must notify the community of lead test results and develop action plans for remediation if test results exceed the action level of five parts per billion.

For additional details on the legislation and testing requirements, see [testing for lead in school drinking water, frequently asked questions](#).

This placed [requirements on the Department of Health \(DOH\)](#), [Schools](#), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public

Instruction (OSPI) to help reduce lead exposure.

Resources

[Flyer: About the Lead in School Drinking Water Program \(PDF\)](#)



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School Requirements for Lead in Drinking Water

Testing Frequently Asked Questions >>

To address concerns about lead in drinking water, and to reduce children's overall exposure to lead in the environment, schools have an important role to play. [Chapter 28A.210.410 RCW requires](#) schools built or with all plumbing replace before 2016 to:

- Sample and Test for lead in drinking water
 - Either allow DOH to sample and test OR
 - Contract with a private entity to conduct sampling *and* testing for lead in drinking water.
 - The private entity must conduct sampling in alignment with the technical guidelines developed by DOH and be a [laboratory accredited by the State Department of Ecology](#).
 - Schools must submit test results to DOH in accordance with the deadlines and procedures determined by DOH. DOH will begin reaching out to

schools in 2023 to receive and review previous test results.

- Take action if any outlets exceed 5 ppb.
 - Immediately shut off water to any outlet with lead levels greater than 15 ppb until mitigation or remediation is completed.
 - Outlets that exceed 5 ppb, but are below 15 ppb, do not have to be shut off or taken out of service, but schools are encouraged to use their best judgement. If possible, all taps which exceed 5ppb should not be used or an alternative source of water should be provided until remediation under the school's action plan is completed.
 - Adopt a school remediation [Action Plan](#) that meets requirements.
 - Consult with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to determine funding sources to cover remediation costs.
 - Additional details - [actions needed after testing](#).
- Communicate
 - Annually
 - As early in the school year as possible, communicate with students' families and staff around lead contamination in drinking water including information on lead exposure and, if applicable, most recent test results and remediation action plan. Schools may choose to use or modify the [community messaging template \(Word\)](#).
 - Note: Communication is not required when initial or post-remediation testing does not detect an elevated lead level at any drinking water outlet. Post the most recent results of testing on a public website.
 - Action plans
 - The school must provide the public with notice and opportunity to comment on the school action plan

before it is adopted.

- A school must post on a public website the most recent results of testing for lead contamination at drinking water outlets, no later than the time that the proposed school action plan is made publicly available.

