



# Water Quality in Our Schools

## **What is the new lead testing in school drinking water legislation?**

On September 6, 2016, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation (A.10740/S.8158) requiring all school districts and boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES) in New York State to test drinking water systems for lead contamination and to take responsive actions. To implement this new law, the Department of Health issued emergency regulations, titled Lead Testing in School Drinking Water.

## **What is the status of lead testing in Williamsville schools?**

The sampling of water outlets in our schools, as required by the new state law, has been completed. Results of the testing will be posted on the district website as they become available. The district is receiving the test results at a rate of about 60 samples per day from EMSL Analytical, Inc., a certified environmental laboratory which has locations across the United States including Buffalo. We expect final, detailed reports for all buildings by the end of November.

## **When was the sampling conducted?**

Elementary school sampling was completed in September and all sampling in Williamsville was completed by October 12, 2016.

## **How many samples were collected in Williamsville?**

Samples were collected and tested from 2,459 water outlets across Williamsville's 13 schools and the district office.

## **What is the required sample size from each outlet?**

250 milliliters (mL), which equals 8.45 ounces.

## **Where were samples collected?**

Samples were collected at all school water outlets including drinking fountains, classroom sinks/faucets, custodial sinks/faucets, kitchen areas, custodial areas, showers (i.e. locker rooms), all lavatories, and outdoor faucets.

## **What is the "action level" for lead in school drinking water under the new state law?**

The action level for lead in school drinking water is 15 million parts per billion (ppb).

## **Who collected the samples?**

District Facility Department personnel collected the samples in strict adherence to the state's "first-draw" sampling protocol .

## **What is a "first-draw" sample?**

A "first-draw" sample is a water sample that is collected from a water outlet before any water is used from that outlet. The water must be motionless in the pipes for a minimum of 8 hours but no more than 18 hours before sample collection. The state regulations for collecting and testing water samples are available on the NYSED website at [www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/LeadTestinginSchoolDrinkingWater](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/LeadTestinginSchoolDrinkingWater).

## **Who is analyzing the samples?**

All drinking water samples must be analyzed by a NYS certified environmental laboratory. Williamsville has contracted with EMSL Analytical, Inc. to conduct the testing.

## **What happens if the lead concentration at an outlet exceeds the action level in our schools?**

If the lead concentration exceeds 15 ppb, the district will take immediate action to reduce potential risk to our students and staff. This may include a combination of the following:

- Immediate disabling of water fountains and/or fixtures that exceed the state-mandated threshold.
- Replacement of fixtures, usually within 24-hours.
- Retesting before outlets are made available for use.\*
- Cap outlets no longer used in the schools, e.g. showers in the elementary schools.
- Providing alternate sources of drinking water, e.g. bottled water.
- Labeling of non-drinking water sources such as custodial sink and outside water faucets indicating that students and staff should not drink from those fixtures. Non-drinking uses such as hand-washing are safe.

\*All retesting will be expedited by the testing laboratory to ensure successful remediation of the affected outlets.

## What is the Western New York Lead Poisoning Prevention Resource Center stating regarding lead in drinking water?

On October 25, 2016, Dr. Melinda Cameron, Medical Director, Western New York Lead Poisoning Prevention Resource Center at Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo released a statement in an effort to respond to reports of lead in schools' drinking water. Below are excerpts from her statement as well as the link to the full news release:

"In this region, lead paint chips and lead in household dust have been implicated as the major contributors to childhood lead exposure. The water testing reports from area schools identify specific sinks, faucets, and drinking fountains that supply water with a lead concentration that exceeds the EPA's action level of 15 parts per billion."

"The amount of exposure for each individual student is unknown... [and] is influenced by how much and how often s/he drinks from the water sources in question and his/her body size."

The full news release can be accessed at

<http://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/StatementOnLeadPaint.pdf>

## What is the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) stating about lead testing in school drinking water?

- Local Health Departments are currently awaiting an Environmental Health Manual (EHM) from New York State with further guidance.
- Parents concerned about test results in their children's schools should speak with their child's primary care provider about the risks associated with lead in drinking water, and possible follow-up testing.
- Within the last ten years, The Erie County Department of Health has no documented cases of elevated blood lead levels attributed to drinking water.
- The ECDOH recently reviewed the District's reference materials and indicated that our resources are thorough and accurate.

## What are the key messages to share with families according to the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSU)?

- The primary source of childhood lead exposure in the US is from lead in dust and soil from deteriorated paint in pre-1978 housing.
- Drinking water in the US is typically not the major source of exposure to lead.
- The most effective treatment for lead poisoning is removal of the source.

## What can parents do??

- Stay informed! Visit the district website to find a complete list of testing results for all Williamsville schools. These reports include the specific location of water outlets that exceed the state-mandated threshold (15 ppb) for lead.
- Ask your school principal what remediation plans are in place for any outlets in your child's school that exceed 15 ppb for lead. You may also contact Mr. Thomas Matuski, Assistant Superintendent for Finance Management Services, who is overseeing the district's water testing and remediation efforts: [tmatuski@williamsvillek12.org](mailto:tmatuski@williamsvillek12.org) or (716) 626-8012
- Our District Nurse Practitioner, Mrs. Christine Harding, is also available should you have questions or concerns regarding your child's health: [charding@williamsvillek12.org](mailto:charding@williamsvillek12.org) or (716) 626-8096.
- If you have specific questions or concerns regarding your child's health, please contact your child's primary care provider to discuss your child's individual risk of exposure and recommendations for possible follow-up testing. Although we do not anticipate the need for any medical intervention at this time, we will work with the local health department and communicate additional information to families should the need arise.
- Contact the federally-designated Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) at [www.pehsu.net](http://www.pehsu.net) to answer lead-related questions that are not answered by your child's health care provider, your state or local health department, and/or your state education department.

## Where can parents and others get more information?

- Erie County Department of Health: <http://www2.erie.gov/health/>
- Statement from the Western New York Lead Poisoning Prevention Program: <http://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/StatementOnLeadPaint.pdf>
- Healthy Schools: [http://www.healthyschools.org/documents/Parent\\_Guide\\_to\\_Lead\\_in\\_School\\_Drinking\\_Water.pdf](http://www.healthyschools.org/documents/Parent_Guide_to_Lead_in_School_Drinking_Water.pdf)
- NYS Department of Health: [https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/child\\_care\\_providers.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/child_care_providers.htm)
- NYS Education Department Facilities Planning: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/>
- EPA-Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-drinking-water-schools-and-child-care-facilities>
- CDC-Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/leadinwater/>
- PEHSU – Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit [http://www.pehsu.net/public\\_news.html](http://www.pehsu.net/public_news.html)