Lead found in Beaverton school water fountains

Water from two drinking fountains at Highland Park Middle School in Beaverton were tested and shown to have elevated levels of lead, the school district announced Monday, July 18.

Highland Park's drinking fountains have been shut off and bottled water has been provided, the district said in a news release. The school, at 20005 S.W. Wilson Ave., has about 900 students.

A certified industrial hygienist tested the water after a student raised concern about the color of water coming out of a fountain, the district said. Tests also showed elevated levels of iron and cloudiness in several drinking fountains, the district said in a news release.

One of the fountains had 21 parts per billion of lead and the other had 15.9 parts per billion. The Environmental Protection Agency considers anything over 15 parts per billion to be "actionable," district spokesman Maureen Wheeler said.

Wheeler said the water was tested again Monday and results would be known later this week.

Parents have been advised to bring their children to their primary care providers if they're concerned about health effects but no school-wide screening of students is planned, Wheeler said.

— Allen Bohneman

Beaverton water safe, city officials declare Monday

The announcement follows discovery of lead at Highland Park

The Times

The city of Beaverton shared with its residents on Monday that the city's drinking water supply is safe and meets or exceeds state and federal standards.

City officials released information about its water supply following an announcement from the Beaverton School District that two water fountains at Highland Park Middle School showed elevated levels of lead related to the age of the pipes in the building.

Beaverton City Council and the school district on Monday announced that bottled water is now available for students during school hours.

The city said it is "assuring residents that our drinking water supply is safe for consumption and meets or exceeds all state and federal standards." The city said it also "continues to monitor the situation closely and will take swift action to address any issues that may arise."
Lead
Continued from A1

Late Friday, the district sent another statement, announcing it would turn off all its drinking fountains and bring in bottled water for drinking and food preparation for the remainder of the school year. Once testing happens this summer, the statement said, officials will turn off and keep off any water fixtures that don’t meet lead standards.

“We are taking these steps out of an abundance of caution for our teachers and our staff, as we seek to determine whether additional students or teachers have elevated levels of lead in the drinking water,” Smith said in the statement.

Parents at the affected schools had said they worried students at other Portland schools could also be drinking tainted water. The last time Portland Public Schools did widespread water quality testing in 2010, the results showed “most schools have at least one location where lead levels are above 15 parts per billion.” Then-Superintendent Jim Schrerringer wrote to parents.

“There is ample reason to assume that retesting all schools in the district will yield a similar outcome to that found at Rose City Park and Creston,” said Portland resident Emily Paterson, whose son attends third grade at Rose City Park.

Martha Ford, a daughter attended first and second grade in one of the Rose City Park buildings, said the school was served by a tainted water fountain, broke down in tears, thinking she sent her child into that setting day after day.

“I feel very betrayed,” she said.

First test since 2001

No one knows how long the faucets and fountains at Rose City Park and Creston have been emitting lead, because they have not been tested since 2001. More than 550 students attend classes in Rose City Park School in Northeast Portland, and 440 go to Creston in Southeast Portland. In its statement late Friday, the district said it would provide on-site blood screening at the two campuses starting the week of June 6.

Portland Public Schools arranged to test the water at Rose City Park after a parent, concerned by what happened in Flint, Michigan, insisted on it. It’s unclear why the district ran tests at Creston. Miles, the district spokeswoman, said, “We do random testing when requested by school staff or concerned parents.”

Those tests detected high levels of lead coming from sinks at both schools and from two drinking fountains at Rose City Park and one at Creston.

Nothing in state or federal law requires schools to test drinking water for lead or recommend how frequently faucets and fountains should be retested after being found safe. But many Portland parents are adamant that it should happen more frequently than every 15 years.

Questionable filters

Outage also surfaced among Portland Public Schools parents in 2003, when the district installed filters and conducted thorough water testing.

Of the first 40 schools tested that year, 25 had unsafe levels of lead in the drinking water. So district officials shut off every drinking fountain and some sinks and hauled in five gallon jugs of clean water for students to drink instead. The last documented testing before then had taken place in 1995.

Parents were irate. New Portland Public Schools regrets not having notified families and staff as soon as the tests indicated that there were elevated levels of lead,” Smith wrote.

Lead-tainted school water filters slowly

By Betsy Hammond
The Oregonian/OregonLive
Portland Public Schools plan to test the water at every school building this summer after tests at Rose City Park and Creston schools found unsafe levels of lead from drinking fountains and drinking fountains.

Parents at Rose City Park say they are extremely upset that school district officials waited until this week to tell them tests conducted eight weeks earlier revealed lead levels as high as double the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s action level of 15 parts per billion.

And parents across the city turned apoplectic Friday when Superintendent Carrol Smith confessed in an email to families and employees that once tests showed the toxic threat, the district kept the water flowing and gave no warning against its use for nearly two weeks while repairs were completed.

That centralised the district’s earlier representations. Spokane’s defensive representations. Spokane’s defensive representatives.

Spokeswoman Christine Miles told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Thursday that students were denied access to the tainted water “immediately” once results were known.

Portland Public Schools regrets not having notified families and staff as soon as the tests indicated that there were elevated levels of lead,” Smith wrote.

monitoring Friday morning but later said he had been asked to delay the interview until after 4 p.m. at 6 p.m., Friley was still unsurprisingly positive.

About the schools

Rose City Park School, built in 1912 and added on to in 1973, is home to Access Academy, a magnet program for gifted students, and first- and third-grade classes from the overcrowded Beverly Creston School.

In March, several sinks in two science classrooms and two other rooms were found to be giving lead-tainted water, so two were drinking fountains, one on the first floor and one on the second. Students were allowed to use those fountains and sinks until they were repaired, which took almost two weeks. Following tests on May 6 showed they were safe. Repairs to the science room sinks didn’t stop lead emissions, so no one is allowed to drink from them, officials indicated.

Creston, built in 1945, is a K-8 school. In March, a kitchen sink, classroom sink and drinking fountain all were found to be emitting high levels of lead in the water. Water from the fountain was found to contain 23 parts per billion of lead.

Tests run in April also showed high lead levels in a kitchen sink, a classroom sink and library fount. It is unclear how often those problems have been detected.

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