

PUBLIC EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEMS

A water system that exceeds the lead action level based on tap water samples is required to deliver a public education program containing the public education materials below.

PROGRAM EDUCATION PROGRAM DELIVERY

Community water systems that fail to meet the lead action level on the basis of tap water samples must, within 60 days;

1. Insert notices in each customer's water utility bill containing the public education materials below, along with the following alert on the water bill itself in large print:

Some homes in this community have elevated lead levels in their drinking water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health. Please read the enclosed notice for further information.

2. The public education materials must be submitted to the major daily and weekly newspapers circulated throughout the community, and pamphlets and/or brochures that contain the public health education materials concerning Health Effects of Lead and Steps You Can Take to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water must be submitted to facilities and organizations, including the following:

Public schools and/or local school boards;
City or county health departments;
Women, Infants, and Children and/or Head Start Program(s) whenever available;
Public and private hospitals and/or clinics;
Pediatricians;
Family planning clinics; and
Local welfare agencies.

3. The public service announcements must be submitted to at least five of the radio and television stations with the largest audiences that broadcast to the community served by the water system. The water system must include the following information in all public service announcements for broadcasting:

Why should everyone want to know the facts about lead and drinking water? Because unhealthy amounts of lead can enter drinking water through plumbing in your home. That's why I urge you to do what I did. I had my water tested for [insert free or \$ per sample]. You can contact the [insert the name of the city or water system] for information on testing and on simple ways to reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water.

To have your water tested for lead, or to get more information about this public health concern, please call [insert the phone number of the city or water system]. ≡

A community water system must repeat the public education requirements listed in items 1 and 2 every 12 months, and submit the public service announcement listed in item 3 every 6 months for as long as the system exceeds the lead action level.

A water system may discontinue delivery of public education materials if the system has met the lead action level during the most recent six-month monitoring period. A water system must recommence public education program delivery if it subsequently exceeds the lead action level during any monitoring period.

A water system that fails to meet the lead action level on the basis of tap samples must offer to sample the tap water of any customer who requests it. The system is not required to pay for collecting or analyzing the sample, nor is the system required to collect and analyze the sample itself.

At the end of each year, a water system which is subject to the public education requirement must submit a letter to Department of Human Services stating that the system has delivered the public education materials that meet the content and delivery requirements. This letter must include a list of all the newspapers, radio stations, television stations, facilities and organizations to which the system delivered public education materials during the year. This letter must be submitted annually for as long as the lead action level is exceeded and public education is required.

PUBLIC EDUCATION MATERIALS COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEMS

Community systems are required to include the following text in all of the printed materials it distributes through its lead public education program. Any additional information presented by a water system must be consistent with this information. If a significant proportion of the population speaks a foreign language, then this information must be translated into that language.

INTRODUCTION

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and [insert name of water supplier] are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes in the community have lead levels about the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L). Under Federal law we are required to have a program in place to minimize lead in your drinking water by [insert date when corrosion control will be completed for your system]. This program includes corrosion control treatment, source water treatment, and public education. If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation, please give us a call at [insert water system=s phone number]. This brochure explains the simple steps you can take to protect you and your family by reducing your exposure to lead in drinking water.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead is a common metal found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery, porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that won=t hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination -- like dirt and dust -- that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children=s hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food into their mouths.

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person=s total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water.

The EPA estimated that drinking water can make up to 20% or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect your house to the water main (service lines). In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

Steps You Can Take at Home to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water

Despite our best efforts mentioned earlier to control water corrosivity and remove lead from the water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the end of this booklet. For more information on having your water tested, please call [insert phone number of water system].

If a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 ppb, then you should take the following precautions:

1. Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15-30 seconds. If your house has a lead service line to the water main, you may have to flush the water for a longer time, perhaps one minute, before drinking. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking.

Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. It usually uses less than one to two gallons of water and costs less than [insert a cost estimate based on flushing two times a day for 30 days] per month. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush to wash dishes or water the plants. If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. These plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of the lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.

2. Try not to cook with, or drink from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove.
3. Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.
4. If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in June 30, 1985, notify the plumber who did the work and request that he or she replace the lead solder with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull grey, and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition, notify your state [insert name of department responsible for enforcing the Safe Drinking water Act in your state] about the violation.
5. Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. **DO NOT** attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 ppb after flushing, or after we have completed our actions to minimize lead levels, then you may want to take the following measures;

1. Purchase or lease a home treatment device. Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce levels at the tap, however all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.
2. Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

You should consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

1. [Insert the name of city or county department of public utilities] at [insert phone number] can provide you with information about your community's water supply, and a list of local laboratories that have been certified by EPA for testing water quality;
2. [Insert the name of city or county department that issues building permits] at [insert phone number] can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home; and
3. [Insert the name of the State Department of Health] at [insert phone number] or the [insert the name of the city or county health department] at [insert phone number] can provide you with information about the health effects of lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.

The following is a list of some State approved laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead. [insert names and phone numbers of at least two laboratories].