

Town of Bedford Consolidated Water District Public Notice – Lead in Drinking Water – September 8, 2015

1. Summary. The Town of Bedford Consolidated Water District monitors its water system for many parameters in compliance with the requirements of the New York State Health Department (DOH). One of these parameters is the concentration of lead in drinking water. The District has obtained sample results below the required DOH action level since the regulations were put in place in the 1990s. However, in the most recent round of samples our results were slightly higher than the DOH action level. Our results were 19 parts per billion, compared to an action level of 15 parts per billion.

Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes in the District have lead levels above the action level of 15 parts per billion, or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water. Of the 20 samples that were collected in 2015, 4 exceeded the action level. Per DOH requirements, these samples are collected by the property owner after the water sits in the pipes for greater than 6 hours. The District does not have lead pipes or high lead solder in our supply or distribution system, the source of lead is leaching from customer owned pipes.

Switching to our new surface water supply from NYCDEP has likely contributed to this issue. Although the new water supply has many benefits, including eliminating scale build up on plumbing fixtures, it is more corrosive to pipes when compared to the hard well water that was our previous source. Our design engineers anticipated this and included the use of food grade water treatment chemicals to reduce corrosion, including sodium hydroxide and orthophosphate. Our operators have been applying these chemicals at the recommended dosages as approved by the DOH. We have discussed our treatment dosages with our design engineers as a result of this problem, and will be slightly increasing the dose of sodium hydroxide in order to reduce the corrosivity of the water. The District will implement this change immediately and will give the change 3 months to take effect in the system. We will monitor lead levels in December 2015, and will notify our customers of the results.

The Bedford Consolidated Water District has a program in place to minimize lead in drinking water. This program includes corrosion control treatment as described above, and public education. If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation please contact Kevin Winn (914) 241-2458. This notice explains the simple steps you can take to protect you and your family by reducing your exposure to lead in drinking water.

DOH requires that lead samples be taken under worst case conditions, when the water has sat stagnant in pipes for over 6 hours. One of the easiest ways to reduce the risk of elevated lead levels in drinking water is to run the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15 to 30 seconds, before using it for drinking or cooking. Additional information on steps to take is included below.

2. 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, 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. Also, 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 try to make sure they only put food into their mouths.

3. Lead in drinking water. Although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, lead in drinking water 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. It is estimated that drinking water can make up to 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

A. Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily because 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 at times, pipes made of lead that connect your house to the water main (service lines). Please note that the District does not have lead service lines. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2 percent lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0 percent.

B. 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 high levels of lead.

4. Steps you can take in the home to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water:

A. 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 own 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. The Town will provide a test for lead at your home at no charge to you. For more information on having your water tested, please call (914) 666-7855. If you would prefer to have your water tested independently, the following is a list of certified laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead: Westchester County Environmental Lab at (914) 231-1620 and YML Environmental Inc at (914) 245-3203.

B. If a water test shows that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 parts per billion, then you should take the following precautions:

- Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has stood 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 to 30 seconds. 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 or two gallons of water and costs less than \$0.30 per month. To conserve water, you can fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush water to wash dishes, watering plants or other purposes that do not involve cooking and drinking. If you live in an apartment complex, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. The plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.
- Do not cook with, or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold water tap and heat it on the stove.
- Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing 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.
- If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in 1986, notify the plumber who did the work and request replacement of the lead solder with lead-free solder. Also, notify the Bedford Building Department at (914) 666-8040 about the violation. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a metal object looks shiny.
- Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with the 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.

C. The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test shows that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations more than 15 parts per billion after flushing and after we have completed our actions to minimize lead levels, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

- Purchase or lease a home water treatment device to remove lead. Home treatment devices are limited because 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 lead 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.
- Purchase, for drinking and cooking, bottled water that is certified by the New York State Department of Health.

D. You can 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:

- The Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 can provide you with information about your community's water supply, a list of local certified laboratories, plus information about the health effects of lead and how to have your child's blood tested for lead.
- The Bedford Building Department (914) 666-8040 can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home.