

## ***PREVENTION PROTOCOL***

# **Safe Drinking Water<sup>1</sup>**

| <b>Depending on Assistance Needed, Call:</b> |              |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|
| DGS Environmental Health and Safety          | 202–576–8962 |
| LEA Contact                                  |              |
| Other                                        |              |

### **Situation Description**

Lead and copper in drinking water present a potential health risk to building users. Children are especially susceptible to lead and copper exposure because their bodies absorb these elements at higher rates than the average adult. Children younger than six are most at risk due to their rapid rate of growth. Exposure to high levels of lead and copper can present a health risk to children and adversely impact classroom performance. Education facilities are also occupied or used by parents, teaching staff, and maintenance personnel. Studies have found that pregnant women who have accumulated exposure to lead through time may also be at risk during pregnancy. For these critical and important reasons, safe drinking water must be provided at education facilities.

The Lead in Water Management Program is responsible for testing and remediation of elevated lead levels discovered in drinking water in education facilities throughout the District of Columbia. This program ensures a healthy environment for students, staff, and community members using DCPS facilities.

### **Legal Requirements**

The Safe Drinking Water Act, passed by Congress in 1974 and amended in 1986 and 1996, was implemented to protect the public health, regulate the Nation's public drinking water and its valuable water sources (i.e., rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ground water, and springs). This framework for legally protecting drinking water is enforceable by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA regulates the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations such as total coliform, lead, and nitrates. Secondary Drinking Water Regulations are nonenforceable guidelines adopted by the individual States, such as pH, color, and iron. Maximum contaminant levels and goals are established for each naturally occurring and manmade pollutant.

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<sup>1</sup> This Protocol contains information developed and implemented by District of Columbia Public Schools and can be used as a guideline for other District LEAs. Each LEA should review and edit the contents to conform to their procedures and contacts.

The EPA's 1991 Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) requires that water delivered to our buildings must contain less than 15 parts per billion for lead. The main sources of lead in our drinking water usually are from plumbing materials made from copper, lead service lines connecting the buildings to public water mains, and lead solder. Lead solder was commonly used before 1990 to join lengths of copper pipes together. Lead also comes from faucets, taps, and fountain bubbler heads containing brass or bronze internal parts. These components can contain lead impurities.

Under the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), "lead free" brass can contain as much as eight percent lead by weight, which is enough to contribute significant amounts of lead to our water. If the water supplied by DC Water is highly or even moderately corrosive, some of the lead and/or copper in plumbing materials may be released into drinking water.

In May of 2010, the Council of the District of Columbia unanimously passed the Healthy Schools Act of 2010, which includes testing drinking water in public schools for lead and taking remedial action if required (Title V, Sec. 501 (a)(5), and posting the results of the tests online (Title V, Sec. 501 (a)(7).

### **Procedures**

Under the Lead in Water Management Program, drinking water is tested on an annual basis during the schools' calendar year. Occasionally additional samples are taken by request due to construction or other activity that interrupt water service. If lead results exceed action levels, lead reduction filters are installed and annually replaced.

If any concern with drinking water is suspected, contact the Environmental Health and Safety at 202-576-8962.