



MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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Thousands of School Water Fixtures Tested under Commonwealth's Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program *Program's Report Recommends the Continuation of Water Sampling within School Facilities*

BOSTON – Continuing a commitment to ensure safe drinking water for students across the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) today issued a report summarizing the results of the first-in-the-nation Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program in Massachusetts. The [report](#), which highlights work done in more than 150 communities, provides data of water sampling within approximately 800 school buildings throughout the state. [Since April 2016](#), \$2.75 million has been made available by the Baker-Polito Administration and State Treasurer Deborah Goldberg through the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust to fund the program.

“Our administration is pleased to have launched the first-in-the-nation program to ensure safe drinking water for students and teachers in our public schools across the Commonwealth,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “By coordinating state resources, the Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program has and will continue to provide valuable assistance to our communities and will raise awareness about the need to test water on a regular basis.”

The Baker-Polito Administration’s program was designed to get more schools to perform lead testing. Under current federal laws, testing in schools is voluntary and this program was designed to make it easier for schools to implement effective testing programs and take water samples. With schools reporting results to MassDEP electronically, residents now have the ability to access information pertaining to their communities.

In the less than 10 percent of cases where exceedances were detected, school officials were encouraged to shut off fixtures, and to communicate the results along with the short-term action plans to parents and staff. Among the actions taken by schools were to remove and replace fixtures, use signage to indicate fixtures not intended to be used for drinking water, and the implementation of water line flushing programs. Additional information can be accessed by visiting the Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program [webpage](#).

“By collaborating with municipal partners and school officials, our administration is ensuring that individuals and their families continue to have access to safe, clean drinking water,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. “We are pleased that so many communities have



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participated, and encourage others to follow to raise awareness across the state and keep our children, teachers and families healthy.”

Through the Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program, nearly 56,000 water samples were collected from approximately 32,000 water faucets, drinking fountains, and other fixtures within the public schools. While most drinking water sources across the Commonwealth are free from lead and copper, when lead and copper is found, it is typically due to water flowing through pipes or plumbing in buildings. As a result of testing, 91 percent of all samples taken measured at or below action levels for lead and copper, and 72 percent of buildings tested between May 2016 and February 2017 had one or more fixture that exceeded the federal and state lead or copper action level that needed to be addressed. The newly released report recommends that approximately \$600,000 in remaining funds should be utilized to continue the assistance program for schools that did not participate. The report also recommends working with public water systems to determine where opportunities for enhanced testing would be appropriate, and posting the results of data online so residents could easily access the information.

“As chair of the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, I am proud of the work being done to ensure that Massachusetts families and children have access to safe and clean water,” **Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg said.** “The funding we provide to local communities is helping to protect the health of our citizens and the environment.”

To implement the program, MassDEP worked with a team from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Key elements of the program include:

- The coordination of informational meetings in all participating communities;
- The providing of technical assistance materials to local school districts;
- The creation of sampling plans to map out all fixtures to be tested within facilities;
- The analysis of all water samples at state-certified labs; and,
- The providing of assistance to local districts on follow-up actions to be taken and public communications plans.

“The Lead in School Drinking Water Assistance Program underscores the Baker-Polito Administration’s commitment to ensuring high water quality is available for students to consume within the state’s public schools system,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton.** “As the program continues to progress, it is important that all communities take advantage of this water testing opportunity and the tools provided by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.”

Additionally, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) provided laboratory analysis and supplemental technical assistance at no charge to the school systems located in communities served by the MWRA. The Department of Public Health (DPH) assisted with



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educational materials focused on the health impacts of lead on children. Also, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the Department of Early Education and Childcare (EEC) assisted with program outreach to public schools across the Commonwealth. One of the goals of the program is to provide the public school systems with the information needed to conduct future water testing on their own.

“This program not only helps local school districts protect their own students, but it raises awareness within each school community of the voluntary sampling program that is ongoing, and it points to the importance of regular testing,” **said MassDEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg.** “As part of our program, MassDEP is posting the results we receive on our web site.”

“We hope this program will make it easier for schools to more effectively test water samples and report the results to MassDEP as part of a continued effort to ensure our students and teachers have access to clean drinking water,” **said Education Secretary James Peyser.**

“In partnership with MassDEP, we have been very aggressive in our school testing program,” **said MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey.** “MWRA’s system has been below the Lead Action Level for over ten years, and our member communities are taking this issue very seriously. Whenever there have been high results, member schools have acted quickly to address the issue – whether it’s shutting off a faucet, conducting an investigation to determine the source of lead, or changing out the fixture completely.”

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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