

Several school districts in Massachusetts have recently reported levels of lead and copper in drinking water higher than acceptable limits. While the level of lead and copper in water supplied to schools in Massachusetts is generally well below the Massachusetts lead and copper action levels, plumbing and fixtures in buildings may contain lead and copper which can result in an increase in the lead and copper content in drinking water. As a result, there is a potential for exposure to lead and copper in drinking water.

On April 26, 2016, Governor Charlie Baker and State Treasurer Deb Goldberg announced that \$2 million from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust (MCWT) will fund cooperative efforts to help Massachusetts public schools test for lead and copper in drinking water. The funds, to be used by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), will provide technical assistance to ensure that public school districts can sample the taps and water fountains in their schools, and to identify any results that show lead and copper contamination over the action level.

The Worcester Public Schools applied for and was selected to participate in this voluntary program. All schools will participate in this program.

In Worcester, elevated lead levels in tapwater are typically due to water being in contact with lead sources within the interior plumbing of buildings. For schools, lead may be found in lead pipes, copper pipes connected with lead solder, or brass faucets or fittings containing lead.

The program consists of a fairly extensive sample of all taps, faucets, and fixtures used for drinking water and food & beverage preparation in each of these schools. Two samples will be taken in each fixture at these schools and sent to a laboratory for analysis. Once the results are provided to the district, the community will be notified and any necessary technical assistance will be provided to the district by MassDEP. We will also work closely with the city's Division of Public Health and the city's Plumbing Inspection unit of Department of Inspectional Services as may be necessary.

If elevated lead or copper levels are found to exist in any of the samples, the following steps are typically recommended to be taken by the district according to MassDEP guidance documents:

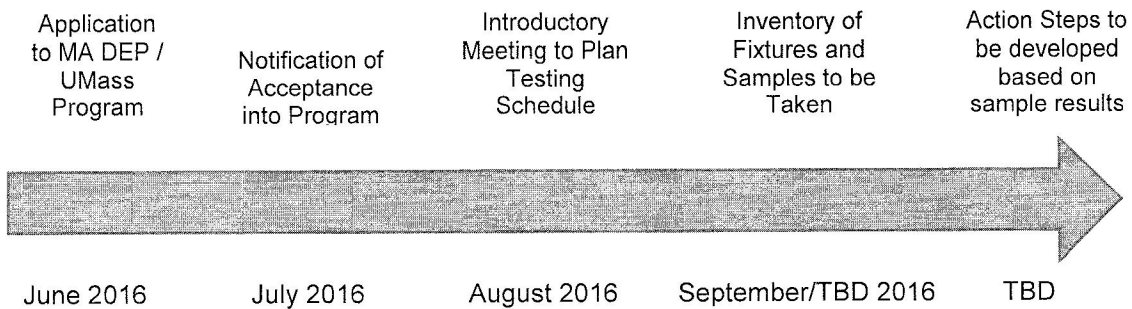
Immediate: Shut Off Problem Fixtures or Implement an acceptable Flushing Program

Then: Determine source creating high levels in the fixture or plumbing system and develop plan for permanent solution.

Sampling in schools must occur when the building is in full occupancy but taps being sampled should be inactive for at least six hours (but no more than eighteen hours). It is expected that these samples will be taken at the schools in the early mornings during the next several months

To date, the Facilities Department, with technical assistance from MassDEP has developed an inventory of all fixtures to be sampled. Over the upcoming two months, each of the schools will undergo the sampling and testing of the water.

Timeframe of District Actions to Date



More information about the Assistance Program for Lead in School Drinking Water program can be found at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/drinking/testing-assistance-for-lead-in-school-drinking-water.html>