

POLICY FOR TESTING LEAD CONTENT IN DRINKING WATER OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

Date came into force or revised: **September 26th, 2016**

Policy statement

School districts must test for lead content in drinking water in their school facilities to ensure quality meets established guidelines under applicable provincial and federal legislation, and report results annually to the Ministry of Education (Ministry).

School districts must take reasonable steps necessary to resolve elevated lead levels that are outside established guidelines on any drinking water quality test results.

Rationale or purpose of policy

This policy provides minimum requirements for testing lead content in drinking water of school facilities, reporting of the results, and mitigation strategies to eliminate or reduce any risks to students and staff.

This policy specifically addresses lead content in drinking water. The Ministry expects school districts to mitigate other issues that affect the quality of water as prescribed under applicable provincial and federal legislation.

Authority

[Drinking Water Protection Act](#)

[Drinking Water Protection Regulation](#)

[Public Health Act](#)

[School Act](#)

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Policy in full

All water suppliers in the province are required to test their water regularly. This includes small private systems (such as restaurants), cooperatively owned systems (such as strata properties), and larger municipal systems owned by local governments.

School districts are responsible for ensuring the quality of water within their systems and plumbing.

The Ministry is responsible to provide oversight to ensure public schools are safe and well-functioning for students and staff across the province. As such, the Ministry has established minimum requirements for lead testing in schools built prior to 1990; due to the use of lead in plumbing materials.

School districts must consult with their Regional Health Authority to develop a water quality lead testing program for their school facilities that would outline the following;

1. Risk assessment
2. Water testing
3. Communication plan
4. Mitigation strategies

A contact list for Regional Health Authorities are provided in the Contacts section of this policy.

Procedures related to policy

School districts must establish a water quality lead testing program that includes;

Risk Assessment

Must include assessment of the school district's facilities inventory including the school (building) age, historical testing results and recent improvements. This information will indicate which facilities are required to be tested for lead content in drinking water as set in the following requirements below.

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All plumbing systems that provide drinking water in school facilities shall be tested for lead content where the;

1. Plumbing systems were installed before January 1, 1990.
2. School has any history of elevated lead levels.

Water Testing Requirement

School districts are to work with their Regional Health Authority to determine a testing program in the school districts portfolio of school facilities. The testing procedure and amount of samples taken at each facility shall be determined in collaboration with the Regional Health Authority, and be based on risk.

School districts must conduct lead content testing in drinking water if the facility is being regularly utilized by students and/or staff. School district may also disable fountains and water systems to eliminate the risk of lead exposure. In this case, testing is no longer required.

School districts must complete lead content testing on all school facilities once every 3 years. Therefore a minimum of 1/3 (or 33%) of the school facilities in a school district's inventory must be tested each year.

Mitigation Strategies

If sample results reveal lead levels above the maximum allowable concentration of 0.010 mg/L as stated from the [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality](#) by Health Canada, the school district in consultation with their Regional Health Authority must commence daily flushing immediately, or deactivate and place a "Not in Use" sign on the water source.

Mitigation solutions may include;

1. Flushing regimes
2. Deactivation of water sources and supplemental signage
3. Installation of filtration systems
4. Plumbing upgrades
5. Or other steps that result in reducing the exposure to lead to acceptable levels

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Communication and Reporting Requirements

Should testing result in elevated levels of lead, the school district must immediately inform the Ministry of the issue.

School districts shall collaboratively work with their Regional Health Authority to communicate the results of testing lead content in drinking water with parents, students and staff by describing the following;

- Rationale for testing lead in drinking water
- Identify partnership with the Regional Health Authority in solutioning
- State results of sampling
- Identify mitigation strategies implemented or being consider by the Board
- Provide contact information for the school district and the Regional Health Authority for parents, students and staff to request further information

School districts must submit all of their testing results annually to the Ministry by March 30th using the “Report for Testing Lead Content in Drinking Water of School Facilities” spreadsheet, as provided.

Links to related policies

N/A

Resources - Links to program areas, manuals, etc.

[Investigating Elevated Copper and Lead Levels In School Drinking Water](#)

[Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality - Summary Table](#)

[Minimizing Exposure to Lead from Drinking Water Distribution Systems](#)

[Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality: Guideline Technical Document – Lead](#)

[Guidance on Controlling Corrosion in Drinking Water Distribution Systems](#)

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Contacts

A current contact list for Regional Health Authorities can be found at;

[Regional Health Authorities](#)