

August 24, 2016

Dear Norwalk Families:

Throughout the 2015-2016 school year there were a number of national news reports concerning the quality of drinking water in schools. These stories indicated that aging school facilities across the country may contain drinking fountains and plumbing fixtures contributing to lead levels higher than the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb).

In an effort to maintain a safe environment for all of our children and staff, the Norwalk City School District completed a voluntary testing sample of district water fixtures on August 15<sup>th</sup>. On August 19<sup>th</sup>, the results of the testing showed that of the 78 drinking fountains and faucets sampled, 10 of the samples had lead levels in excess of the 15 ppb. In response to these results, all affected water fountain and faucets were immediately shutdown. As an added precaution, the district has also shutdown all similar water fixtures.

As of today, many of the identified drinking fountains and faucets have been replaced or will be replaced in the upcoming days. We will work extensively with the City of Norwalk and Huron County Public Health (HCPH) to ensure our students and staff have access to the safest water possible. We are providing safe sources of drinking water for student and staff in areas where drinking fountains have been shutdown. Students are also permitted to bring their own water bottles until further notice. Going forward we will be partnering with HCPH to retest the district's water fixtures and fountains to ensure our water complies with EPA standards for lead levels. The Norwalk City School District will also now engage in voluntary yearly testing of our drinking water. We have included a FAQ with this letter to answer some of the questions you may have concerning lead contamination.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 419-668-2779 to discuss any questions you may have. We are currently working with our partners to make local blood lead level testing available; dates and times are to be determined. Specific information about testing locations, dates, and times will be available to parents as soon as details are finalized. We will continue to keep you informed regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

George E. Fisk  
Superintendent  
Norwalk City School District

## Norwalk City Schools – Lead in Drinking Water – August 24, 2016

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What is lead?

- a. Lead is a naturally occurring bluish-gray metal found in small amounts in the earth’s crust. Lead in soil and water usually occurs from natural sources in the ground, or when lead settles out of the air.
- b. It is common for some plumbing systems to contain lead, which is colorless, tasteless, and unscented.

#### 2. What are the health effects of lead?

- a. Lead in drinking water is particularly concerning because even small amounts of lead can cause learning and behavior problems, anemia, and effects on growth and hearing.
- b. Adults are less likely to be harmed by lead in water.

#### 3. Why is there lead in school drinking water at Norwalk City Schools?

- a. In the City of Norwalk, water is supplied by the Norwalk Municipal Water System and normally contains minimal amounts of lead before it reaches Norwalk schools and homes. In 2016, water in 30 private residences supplied by the Norwalk Municipal Water System were tested for lead in the drinking water. Results indicated that Norwalk City’s water is compliant with the Lead and Copper Rule.
- b. However, some plumbing materials found in schools, such as pipes, fountains/fixtures, and solder have parts containing lead. In general, older parts contain more lead than newer parts. Lead is released into tap water from these materials through a process called leaching when water is in contact with these materials over time.

#### 4. How much lead is in the drinking water at my child’s school?

- a. Norwalk City Schools tested for lead in drinking water at Maplehurst Elementary, League Elementary, Main Street Intermediate, Pleasant Elementary, Norwalk Middle School, and Norwalk High School. A total of 78 water fountains and sinks were tested; the amount of lead in the water varied by school and location within each school.
- b. 8% of samples taken returned samples positive for lead.

School	Number of Samples Taken	Number of Samples Flagged* <small>*15 PPB or higher</small>
Maplehurst Elementary	10	2
League Elementary	8	1
Main Street Intermediate	9	5
Pleasant Elementary	13	1
Norwalk Middle School	7	1
Norwalk High School	31	0

#### 5. How were samples collected?

- a. Samples were collected at schools by Pardee Environmental.
- b. The number of samples taken exceeded the EPA’s recommendations.
- c. These procedures recommended that first-draw samples be collected at a fixture such as a sink faucet or water fountain to assess lead levels in the water.
- d. Drinking water was found to be in excess of Ohio EPA guidelines.

**6. What does the government say about how much lead is acceptable in water?**

- a. The EPA has established guidelines for lead in school drinking water of 15 parts per billion (ppb).
- b. The EPA recommends that when this level is exceeded, steps should be taken to limit exposure or reduce lead in school drinking water.

**7. What is the Norwalk City School District doing about this issue?**

- a. Testing was performed on August 15, 2016 and results were received August 19, 2016.
- b. Because several samples were taken from the same water line, the assumption at this time is that the lead issue is within the fixtures, for example, sinks and drinking fountains, NOT the plumbing system or pipes.
- c. Norwalk City Schools shut down 100% of affected fixtures (i.e. water fountains, sinks) on August 19, 2016.
- d. Replacement parts or fixtures for all affected fixtures were ordered on August 19<sup>th</sup> and were replaced immediately as they arrived.
- e. When school started on August 22, water was provided to students in coolers from unaffected fixtures. Norwalk City School District also encourages parents with any concerns to supply their children with water bottles from home.
- f. Fixtures similar in type to those affected by the issue will remain offline and will be replaced within two weeks.
- g. Each source of water in the affected school buildings will be retested within two weeks.
- h. Norwalk City School District is working in collaboration with Huron County Public Health, Fisher-Titus Medical Center, and the City of Norwalk to resolve the issue.

**8. What can I do about this issue?**

- a. Blood testing is the most useful available measure for assessing lead exposure in children. Turn-around time for filter paper testing is approximately 7 days.
- b. Children aged 6 and under, as well as pregnant or nursing women should be tested for blood lead levels, as they are the groups most sensitive to the health effects of lead. Older children may be tested if parents choose to do so.
- c. Local testing will be provided by Huron County Public Health during the week of August 29; dates and times are TBD. Primary care physicians will also offer blood lead testing. Specific information about testing locations, dates, and times will be available to parents as soon as details are finalized.

**9. Where can I go for more information?**

- a. The Norwalk City School District's webpage at [www.norwalktruckers.net](http://www.norwalktruckers.net) will be updated with information about the situation as it further develops.
- b. Huron County Public Health's website at [www.huroncohealth.com/lead](http://www.huroncohealth.com/lead) contains information about the health effects of lead and recommendations for lead testing. If you have specific health-related questions, the health department can be reached at 419-668-1652.