



*A Community of Learners*

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## Water Testing Overview

Recent events have brought a national focus to water quality and, more specifically, lead levels in water. In the spring of 2016 and 2017, District 36 conducted lead testing at all five District schools as a proactive measure, prior to any State or Federal requirements. Results from testing conducted in March and April 2017 may be accessed [here](#). Immediate corrective action was taken in order to address any fixtures where lead was detected.

In efforts to continually monitor the water quality in our facilities, the District commissioned comprehensive testing for lead throughout our school buildings again in Spring 2018 (273 samples). Testing was conducted at Crow Island, Hubbard Woods, Greeley, Skokie and Washburne Schools the week of May 1-May 9, 2018. Preliminary results of the tests were just received and include evidence that less than 10% of the sources tested produced lead levels above the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) threshold of 5 parts per billion. The District is now taking immediate steps to address the noted water sources.

## Water Testing Conducted May 1 - May 9, 2018

A total of 273 samples were collected from four school district buildings including, Carleton Washburne School, Hubbard Woods School, The Skokie School, Greeley School and Crow Island School. Testing took place from May 1 - May 9, 2018. Sampling locations included all fountains, sinks used for food preparation and sinks present in rooms occupied by students of Kindergarten age or younger. Samples were collected in new, sealed 250 milliliter (ml) bottles after the water was stagnant in the building piping for a minimum of 8 hours but not more than 18 hours. All samples were collected from the fixtures as “first draw” and “flush.” The flush sample was collected approximately 30 seconds following the first draw sample.

### *Results above the IL Department of Public Health Threshold (>5 parts per billion)*

School*	Water Source Location
Crow Island School	Room 024 (Special Education classroom) sink
Crow Island School	Room 110 (classroom) two fixtures

Crow Island School	Room 153 (classroom kitchen) sink
Greeley School	Teacher's Lounge sinks
Greeley School	Room 122 (Kindergarten) drinking fountain*
Greeley School	Room 122 (Kindergarten) storage
Greeley School	Room 217 (Art room) two sinks
Carleton Washburne School	Room N117 (Kitchen) sinks
Carleton Washburne School	Teacher's Lounge
Skokie School	Room 044

>5 ppb & <15 ppb	<i>water samples with lead concentrations greater than the Illinois Department of Public Health's reporting limit</i>	>15 ppb	<i>water samples above the Environmental Protection Agency acceptable threshold</i>
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\*When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into the drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon if the water has not been used all day, can contain higher levels of lead. The drinking fountains that tested over 15 ppb in the above table have been inoperable or not in use for an extended period of time. In each instance the results of the second test performed after flushing the water, the ppb levels were reduced.

**ABOUT THE RESULTS:** The EPA sets an action level for lead in Public Water Systems (PWS) of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L).

The results for the remaining 263 tests (96%) were below 5 ppb. Lab report details for all the tested areas will be posted on the District website the week of Monday, June 4, 2018.

**CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TAKEN**

We have taken the following steps to correct or minimize lead exposure in the drinking water.

- The fixtures listed in the chart above have been disabled or highlighted as “hand washing only” areas until they can be repaired, replaced, or removed. In most instances, simply replacing the older fixture with a newer model reduces the concentration of lead to an acceptable level.
- Once fixtures are repaired or replaced, the water will be resampled and tested to ensure the source of the elevated lead levels has been removed before use.

## Drinking Water Information and Resources

The Winnetka Public Schools is committed to the health and safety of all students and adults in our schools. In spring 2018, the District conducted random samples of the drinking water at our schools to test for lead. We wish to share this educational information about lead in drinking water as well as the results received from environmental consultants at *Ramboll Environ*.

### **Lead in Drinking Water**

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20% or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

### **How Lead Enters our Water**

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome-plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect buildings to water mains (service lines). In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes, and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into the drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon if the water has not been used all day, can contain higher levels of lead.

### **Health Effects of Lead**

Lead is found throughout the environment in lead based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body.

Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination – like dirt and dust – that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

Bathing, showering, and hand washing should be safe even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

## **Reducing Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water:**

**1. FLUSH YOUR SYSTEM** Let the water run from the cold water tap for about 15-30 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. Although using the toilet or shower flushes water through a portion of the plumbing, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it to drink or cook.

**2. USE ONLY COLD WATER FOR COOKING AND DRINKING** Do not cook with, or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and then heat it. Note that boiling water will NOT get rid of lead contamination.

**3. USE BOTTLED WATER** The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if you are still concerned, you may wish to use bottled water for drinking and cooking.

**Lead Information Sources:** *United States Environmental Protection Agency, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.*

**For More Information** please contact Brad Goldstein, Chief Financial Officer of Winnetka Public Schools at 847-501-2522 or [bradgoldstein@winnetka36.org](mailto:bradgoldstein@winnetka36.org) or visit <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water>.