



Department of Health

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December 2016

## **Important Notice**

### **RI Department of Health Plans for Lead Testing of Schools' Drinking Water**

Dear School Superintendent:

**Please engage with us.** The RI General Assembly has directed that drinking water consumed by students in all public schools, pre-K through grade 12, be tested for lead.

#### **Please let us know by December 16, 2016:**

- a) If you have already tested drinking water in your school system for lead. If yes, we may be able to use those results rather than asking you to test again. Please also let us know how to access those results (name, phone and email address of whom we should contact for those data).
- b) If you have not tested your schools' drinking water, please let us know if you are willing to participate in the testing project outlined below. If yes, we also need the name and contact information (name, phone and email address) for the responsible person(s) in your schools or school district. We will reach out to them with support and detailed information to assist them. There will no direct costs to your district.
- c) **Please respond about a) or b) to:** Elizabeth Herron, Project Coordinator at the University of Rhode Island. Email: [eherron@uri.edu](mailto:eherron@uri.edu) Tel: 401-874-4552

**Project Intent and Goals.** Lead in drinking water supplies in Flint, Michigan sparked concern in the RI General Assembly about our schools' water supplies. Our job is to provide the Assembly with information and recommendations on current conditions statewide, as well as to support community efforts to provide safe schools. Participation in this current testing project is voluntary, but we hope you will join the effort. We will be reporting back to the General Assembly on participation by each school district in April 2017.

**Project Leadership.** To complete statewide testing and reporting in a short amount of time, the RI Department of Health has asked the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Water Program (URI) to lead the project. As noted above, Elizabeth Herron is the Project Coordinator. We have also convened an Advisory Group which includes members from the RI Department of Education and the RI Association of School Principals. They help guide the project through monthly meetings and follow up activities.

**How the Project Will Work.** Given limited time and fiscal constraints, we plan to collect at least 3 drinking water samples in each public school building. While not a complete assessment, this sampling should help to identify whether a building has potential problems that require further investigation.

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**Steps we will take in the water sample collection process:**

1. Ask school staff to identify water fountains and taps most often used by children.
2. Provide sampling bottles and clear, easy to use instructions.
3. Arrange for sampling bottles pick up and lab analysis at no cost to the school district.
4. Share sampling results with your office, individual schools, and the RI General Assembly.
  - If elevated lead levels are found, we will provide guidance about steps to take.
  - Past sampling in local schools has found only a small number of samples that contained elevated lead levels.
  - Remediation measures are often simple and low-cost.
5. Gather data from communities that have already tested their school water and add their data to the statewide results.
6. Provide you with sample letters to send to parents before testing and after results are available. We know it's important to keep the community informed.

**We need to hear from you by December 16.** Please contact Elizabeth Herron, Project Coordinator, to let her know if your district's schools have already tested their drinking water for lead, or if you agree to participate in this current water testing effort.

- If you have already tested, please let Elizabeth know how to access your results.
- If you agree to participate in this project, please let her know the name(s) and contact information for the responsible person(s) in your schools or district. Thank you.

**Contact Information:**

Email: [eherron@uri.edu](mailto:eherron@uri.edu)

Tel: 401-874-4552

URL: <http://web.uri.edu/nemo/lead-in-water>

Sincerely,



June Swallow, Chief  
Center for Drinking Water Quality  
RI Department of Health

CC:

Anna Novais, Department of Health  
Steven Boudreau, Department of Health  
Elizabeth Herren, University of Rhode Island