Highland Park

August 3, 2017

Lead Testing Q&As

What facilities are being tested?
City Facilities:

- City Hall
- Fire Station – Central Ave
- Fire Station – Half Day Road
- Fire Station - Ravinia
- Police Department
- Public Services Building
- Senior Center
- Youth Services Facilities
- Highland Park Public Library
- Train Station – St. Johns Ave.
- Train Station – Ravinia
- Water Treatment Plant
- Karger Center

When did the testing begin?
Sample collection began Monday, July 24, 2017. The testing of all City facilities could take up to 4 weeks.

When will the results of the collaborative water testing be available to the public?
The test results take approximately three weeks to complete.

What are the collection procedures for drinking water testing?
The City's Water Plant staff will collect the water samples and transport them to PDC Laboratories in Peoria, IL for processing. PDC uses an analytical method that can see test results at lower concentrations. The certified laboratory will submit the test results to the City.

What are some common problems found when testing?
In general, you may find a presence of lead in drinking water when:

- Lead pipes are used throughout the facility
- Sediment or scale in the plumbing and faucet screens contain lead
- Brass fittings, faucets, and valves were installed throughout the building less than five years ago (even though they may contain less than the "lead-free" requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act)

In general, you may find localized presence of lead if:

- Some brass fittings, faucets, and valves have been installed in the last five years (even though they may meet the SDWA "lead-free" requirement)
- Drinking water outlets are in line with brass flush valves, such as drinking water fountains near restroom supply piping
- Lead pipes are used in some locations
- Lead solder joints were installed in short sections of pipe before 1986 or were illegally installed after 1988 (i.e., after the lead-free requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act took effect)
- There are areas in the building's plumbing with low flow or infrequent use
- Sediment in the plumbing and screens frequently contains lead
- Some water coolers or other outlets have components that are not lead-free, especially if the water is corrosive

What are the benefits of testing for lead?

- Protecting the health and well-being of residents and visitors
- Raising awareness of potential problems, causes and health effects of lead in drinking water
- Setting a high-standard for other communities to follow
- Peace of mind for the community

What will the organizations do if elevated levels of lead are found?

Solutions to lead problems typically need to be made on an interim (short-term) and on a permanent basis. Interim measures can be taken until a permanent solution has been put in place. In addition, there are routine measures that would be taken. The organization would work closely with maintenance staff and any plumbers making repairs.

Several routine control measures that could be taken include:

- Creating aerator (screen) cleaning maintenance schedule and cleaning debris from all accessible aerators frequently
- Using only cold water for food and beverage preparation
- Instructing the users (students and staff) to run the water before drinking

Short-term control measures include:

- "Flushing" the piping system in the building
- Providing bottled water
- Shutting off problem outlets

Organizations can take a number of steps to reduce or eliminate the sources of lead that originate in the facilities' plumbing. After obtaining an evaluation of the water supply, if lead if present the organization will take steps to fix the situation.

What are the health effects of lead exposure?

Lead is a toxic metal that is harmful to human health. Young children are at particular risk for lead exposure. Children's nervous systems are still undergoing development and thus are more susceptible to the effects of toxic agents. Lead is also harmful to the developing fetuses of pregnant women.

The degree of harm from lead exposure depends on a number of factors including the frequency, duration, and dose of the exposure(s) and individual susceptibility factors (e.g., age, previous exposure history, nutrition, and health).

How does lead get into drinking water?

Even though the drinking water supplied by the City of Highland Park is lead free, facilities may have elevated lead levels due to plumbing fixtures and water use patterns. Additional information can be found on City's website at www.cityhpil.com/leadwatertesting.

How is lead in drinking water currently regulated?

Lead is regulated in public drinking water supplies under a federal law known as the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). This Act was initially passed in 1974 and, in part, requires EPA to establish regulations for known or potential contaminants in drinking water for the purpose of protecting public health.

Can I have my property tested?

Residents can have the water in your home tested for lead. The City of Highland Park Water Treatment Plant laboratory is not certified for metals analysis. Please see the link on the City's website of accredited labs for lead testing for a list of laboratories that can test residential water samples. Please follow the sampling procedure as noted in IEPA guidelines.

How can I reduce exposure to lead in the tap water?

To reduce exposure to lead in the tap water, always use cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula, as hot water is more likely to contain lead. Boiling water does not remove lead. If water has not been run for more than 6 hours, flush your water system. This can be done by running the tap for a minimum of 5 minutes, flushing the toilet, taking a shower, or doing laundry. You may consider purchasing and installing a filter that is certified to remove lead. And also considering hiring a Licensed Certified Plumber to evaluate the faucets, fittings, and pipes