

# MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON

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TO: Parents/Guardians and Staff of RSU 9  
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent  
RE: District Water Update  
DATE: May 8, 2022

Over the last 36 hours we have worked closely with the Maine Drinking Water Program (DWP) to learn as much as we could about lead found in water and why. Our biggest concerns with keeping our schools open last Friday were with our kitchens and sharing correct information with you. We could have turned off fountains as we had during the pandemic and bought bottled water for each school and we would have made it through the day. But, since the possible concerns with lead included our kitchens, and our need to give you as much information as possible, we canceled school.

## State Regulations:

- State standards are designed to provide information on water not to tell school districts what they are to do.
- With testing results, requirements at the state level are for us to do public notification and share certification of results. Remediation is completely voluntary.

## We have learned that:

- “Source water almost never contains lead naturally”
  - Water itself is corrosive and things dissolve well in water - such as lead from plumbing and fixtures
  - Water in New England is more corrosive than in most of the country.
- In normal times 6-7 percent of fixtures test above 15 ppb
  - As a result of shutdown of fixtures and water standing in systems influenced by the pandemic, the rate this year is closer to 12-14 percent above 15ppb
  - 9 - 11 percent of water systems through the state test high for lead
    - During the pandemic this number has also increased.
- In kitchens
  - **Lead leaches more quickly in hot water**
  - EPA's guidance is to start with cold water for food prep
  - Since our water is plumbed separately, our focus is with the fixtures not our water source.
- **Lead is NOT absorbed through touch but through ingestion.**
- Guidance per the Maine DWP about *OUR schools*
  - Dishes, utensils, pots, pans, etc. can be washed using our water
  - Fixtures that were tested and the results are below 4ppb (“NEW” State threshold) *may be used as normal*
  - All fountains and bottle fill stations that are below 4 ppb can be used safely and normally
  - A school that only has a few locations above 4ppb (which should be turned off) may use all other water sources normally
  - Sink expectations signage (“Used for Washing Hands Only”, “Do Not Drink” etc.) should be posted
  - Use bottled water in kitchens for food preparation this week to assist with our transition.

*“Preach, my dear sir, a crusade against ignorance.” Thomas Jefferson*

**Over the last two days** we have checked and rechecked all of our previous testing sites to see if we needed to add others, and to make sure we are set with the next round of testing which we hope to start Monday, May 9. Our principals and assistant principals have been and are checking to ensure that all signage is up and ready at each school for school on Monday, May 9. We have created a [new website](#) where all district water testing information will be posted as it becomes available. Bottled water is available at each school and in every kitchen for use by students and staff (thanks again to Walmart and Hannaford for all of their assistance, donations, and continued support).

**To correct the immediate problems we have taken the following actions:**

- Disabled fixtures that tested above 4ppb
- Posted signage indicating fixtures that are not usable due to lead and have been disabled
- Posted signage specifying “Do Not Drink” or “Not for Consumption” on faucets used for hand-washing or hand sinks in kitchens
- Provided bottled water/water coolers for students and staff at each of our schools (available next several weeks)
- Food preparation this week will be done with bottled water
- Conducting remediation testing as soon as possible (target date is tomorrow, Monday May 9, 2022).

**Over the last three days we have taken multiple steps to ensure our schools are safe for students and staff to return to class. \*\*If a parent/guardian wants to keep their student(s) home Monday, May 9, so they can take more time to review all of the information we have shared, please know it will be considered an excused absence; please notify the school as you would with any other absence.**

**RSU 9 LONG-TERM NEXT STEPS:**

- \*Remediation Testing following state guidelines
  - As quickly as possible following test results (new testing bottles are to be here tomorrow morning)
    - Test each fixture as per “normal” use
    - Test each fixture after 30 second flush
    - Test fixture closest to water supply
  - Pending results determine our next steps
    - 90 percent of time it is with fixtures
    - If so, replace fixture with “non-lead” fixtures
      - Pre 1990 lead/copper solder
      - Pre 2011 more prevalent to have lead
  - If testing determines it is plumbing behind fixtures
    - <less than 15ppb - we can install filters to remediate
    - >15ppb - we will contract with a specialist/expert to assist.

*\*The above results will then determine if we will need to replace fixtures, install filters, or replace plumbing which we will then contract with a specialist for additional assistance if necessary.*

Linked here is information about [Lead in Drinking Water](#) and the [law that was originally enacted in 2019](#).

**Later today, a school-specific memo will be sent to parents and staff of each school along with their specific testing results. Thanks again for your patience and understanding as we do our best to share clear and accurate information with you.**