

Addressing Lead and Copper in Quincy

Quincy Public Schools

Interim and Long Term Response Plans

***Prepared by the Quincy Public Buildings Department
in collaboration with the Quincy Public Schools
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Background/Introduction:

In September of 2016, the City of Quincy embarked upon a testing program to comprehensively evaluate water quality in all public schools in relation to lead and copper. Currently, testing requirements developed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) are limited and only require the testing of two water sources at two schools annually. Mayor Koch directed Public Buildings and School officials to test all water sources in all public schools with a primary aim of ensuring the health protection of students and staff.

While health officials seek to reduce, and eliminate any source of lead exposure to children, the most significant exposure and health concern is focused on children under the age of six exposed to lead paint in older housing. The federal Environmental Protection Agency and MDEP have established action levels for both lead and copper in drinking water. The MDEP action level for lead is .015 mg/L or 15 ppb; the action level for copper is 1.3 mg/L or 1300 ppb. Action levels are established to prevent chronic/long term exposure that over time could impact health. Identifying water sources with exceedances provides a framework for response.

Results:

Results of water testing for all of Quincy's 20 public school buildings are now available. A summary table indicating the number of hand washing sinks and drinking water fountains/bubblers that exceeded the MDEP action levels for lead and copper by school is presented in Table 1. Of the 1249 samples taken from across all public schools, 26 water fountains and 100 sinks exceeded the action levels for lead and/or copper.

Table 1:

Quincy Public Schools Building	Total Samples	Action Items Sinks	Action Items Bubblers
<i>Amelio Della Chiesa ECC</i>	52	0	0
<i>Atherton Hough</i>	41	0	0
<i>Atlantic</i>	40	3	1
<i>Beechwood</i>	56	8	0
<i>Bernazzani</i>	64	11	2
<i>Broad Meadows</i>	42	2	0
<i>Central</i>	142	0	0
<i>Clifford Marshall</i>	104	0	0
<i>Lincoln-Hancock</i>	96	24	4
<i>Merrymount</i>	48	8	3
<i>Montclair</i>	32	5	0
<i>North Quincy HS</i>	86	5	13
<i>Parker</i>	34	1	1
<i>Point Webster</i>	32	0	0
<i>Quincy HS</i>	124	1	0
<i>Snug Harbor</i>	90	11	0
<i>Squantum</i>	78	10	2
<i>Sterling</i>	50	4	0
<i>Wollaston</i>	30	7	0
<i>GOALS</i>	8	0	0
TOTAL	1249	100	26

Response to Findings:

A series of steps were immediately taken as soon as results became available. Upon notification from the laboratory that a water bubbler exceed the action level, the unit was immediately disabled pending repair or replacement. Similarly, as soon as data was available indicating an action level exceedance in a hand washing sink, the unit was posted using language provided by the MDEP to make clear that the unit is for hand washing ONLY. Signage has been translated as well in consideration of the population served by each school.

Interim Response for Drinking Water fountains/bubblers:

In addition to immediate response actions, a series of interim measures have been taken to ensure that an adequate supply of drinking water is available consistent with state law(s) associated with the availability of drinking water in schools. These interim measures include the provision of drinking water coolers at all elementary schools with water fountains/ bubblers exceeding action levels. These water coolers will remain in place until permanent replacement/repair of bubblers with lead free plumbing materials are in place. The city has hired a plumbing contractor to provide cost estimates for repair, replacement, and in some cases, removal of the bubblers and hand washing sinks. Prioritization has been given to the bubblers and to sinks in elementary and middle school classrooms as well as nurse's rooms and the Special Education classroom at North Quincy. This work commenced during the week of Thanksgiving, and is ongoing. Once water fountains/bubblers and sinks have been repaired and/or replaced they will be tested again for lead and copper prior to their use by students and staff at each school.

Long Term Planning:

A great deal of discussion has already taken place regarding long term plans associated with all drinking water fountains/bubblers and hand washing sinks regarding both remediation and future testing. Suggestions have been offered through public meetings/dialogue, direct communication from parents and school staff, including school nurses and a range of others with an interest in this issue. The comprehensive testing program has provided an enormous data set upon which plans are being developed. The data and associated information also provides a variety of potential paths to follow. For example, plans for future testing (beyond that associated with requirements for municipal water supplies) could focus on older schools that were built prior to the ban on use of lead plumbing materials in 1986. Such a plan would be altered however based on repair/replacement of units as previously described. Other discussion has involved long term capital funds to potentially replace all units with pre-1986 plumbing materials. In that case, comprehensive testing would not be necessary. As remedial plans progress information provided in this report will be updated.