

Boston Water and Sewer Commission

980 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02119
617-989-7000



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CONTACT: Dolores Randolph
Director of Communications
(617) 989-7000

In compliance with State and Federal regulations, the Boston Water and Sewer Commission must annually collect tap water samples from residential properties that have lead water services or copper services with lead solder and have the samples analyzed for lead. In the latest round of sampling, tap water samples taken from six properties exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency and MassDEP action level for lead of 15 parts per billion with readings of 21 ppb. Due to the exceedance, the Commission is required to provide notification to its customers and the public. Additionally, as required under federal and state regulations and working with MassDEP, the Commission will be conducting increased monitoring, providing public education materials to the public as well as removing additional lead service lines in the distribution system.

At the source of supply, Boston's drinking water, which is provided by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), is lead-free when it leaves the reservoirs. Neither MWRA's, nor the Boston Water and Sewer Commission's water distribution mains contain lead. Lead can enter the drinking water when the property contains lead service pipes, lead solder used to connect pipes, and older brass faucets and fixtures. In addition, when water remains unused for long periods of time, lead contained in these fixtures can dissolve into the water. Excessive amounts of lead in the body can cause serious adverse health effects including damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to infants and young children, whose physical growth and mental development can be impaired by lead contamination. Also vulnerable are pregnant women, whose fetuses can be harmed by lead.

The Commission continues to work with all property owners and has worked to remove barriers which may discourage the removal of lead service lines. This year, the Commission is offering eligible customers the opportunity to replace the lead service line in their property free of charge. In the past year, the Commission has removed over 240 lead service lines. Through the **No Cost Lead Incentive Replacement Program**, we expect that number to increase substantially for the health and safety of our customers. In keeping with regulatory requirements, the Commission is expanding its Public Education Outreach campaign to advise all consumers of the dangers of lead in drinking water and the general environment and to inform them of the steps to take to avoid lead exposure.

The goal of the outreach program is to continue these efforts towards the removal of lead service lines in the city of Boston.

"The longer water remains in contact with plumbing materials containing lead, the greater the possibility that lead will dissolve into the drinking water," said John P. Sullivan, P.E., Chief Engineer. This means that the first water drawn from a tap that has not been used for several hours may contain elevated levels of lead.

It is strongly recommended that all water consumers who have lead service pipes or other plumbing that contains lead, flush water that has not been used for several hours for a period of 30 seconds to 2 minutes or until the water feels cold prior to using the water for drinking or cooking.

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For more information about lead in drinking water and to find out how to test tap water for lead, Boston residents may contact the Commission at the **Lead Hotline at (617) 989- 7888**. Customers may also visit the Commission's website at bwsc.org with any questions and obtain free brochures about lead in drinking water.

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Boston is home to New England's oldest and largest water, sewer, and storm water systems, which are owned, maintained, and operated by Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC). Established in 1977, BWSC provides potable water and sewer services to more than one million people per day. BWSC is also the leading organizer of We Are All Connected, a campaign to raise public awareness about the importance of protecting and preserving Boston's waterways. For more information please visit: www.bwsc.org.