

To: Parents and Guardians

From: Mark Mills, Director of Maintenance and Operations

Date: November 14, 2018

RE: Western Heights Middle School Water Testing Results

The state of Maryland recently passed a law (COMAR 26.16.07) that requires public and non-public schools to test their drinking water outlets for lead contamination and to establish an ongoing program to minimize the risk of exposure to lead in the drinking water at school buildings. The law established an action level of 20 parts per billion (ppb) for lead in drinking water in school buildings. A drinking water outlet is defined as a potable water fixture that is used for drinking or food preparation. Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) has identified all drinking water outlets in schools that must be tested. WCPS will test all drinking fountains, classroom sinks, health room sinks, work room sinks, restroom sinks, ice making equipment, and kitchen sinks used for food preparation.

The Maryland law requires WCPS to test all drinking water outlets in schools that serve students in grades Pre-K-grade 5 and all other schools built before 1988 by July 1, 2018. Schools built after 1988 and serve grades 6-8 must be tested by July 1, 2019, and schools built after 1988 and serve grades 9-12 by July 1, 2020. Any water outlet that has a sample that is higher than 20 ppb lead, requires a remedial plan of action.

On May 9, 2018, samples were taken for 82 outlets at Western Heights Middle School. First draw sample results were received on June 8, 2018, with 1 sink testing positive for elevated levels of lead. Regulation defines an elevated lead level to be greater than 20 parts per billion.

This sink is located in classroom 005, left side (21 ppb).

Follow-up flush samples are required to be conducted within 5 school days after elevated results. On June 14, 2018, a flush sample was drawn on the 1 outlet with an elevated level of lead. The flush sample result was received on June 19, 2018, and the sample result showed the level of lead to be non-detectable.

All drinking fountain samples at Western Heights Middle School had non-detectable levels of lead.

The remedial plan of action includes: permanently closing access or removing the outlet, repairing the outlet or service line, installing filters or automatic flush devices, and/or providing bottled water.

Washington County Public Schools has posted signs at the outlets indicating they are for “Hand Washing Only” until the outlets can be replaced. After the outlets are replaced, another round of testing will be conducted to determine if the outlet can be used for drinking in the future.

The EPA has determined that lead in drinking water is a health concern at certain levels of exposure. Lead is found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery (such as porcelain), pewter, and water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells, and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that will not hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination - like dirt and dust - that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children’s hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

If you have any further questions, please contact:

**Mark Mills, Director of Maintenance and Operations**

**301-766-2978**

**Matt Burton, Facilities Operations Manager**

**301-766-2864**