RaeAnn Fiebing <fiebingra@tcapsstudent.net>

Lead Testing Results for TC High School

1 message

TCHS Important Message <fiebingra@tcaps.net> Tue, Aug 15, 2023 at 3:10 PM
To: fiebingra@tcaps.net

Great Community, Great Schools

Dear TCHS Parents and Staff,

As part of Traverse City Area Public Schools' (TCAPS') commitment to protecting the health and well-being of all our students and staff, this past spring the district voluntarily partnered with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to test our drinking water for lead at all locations thought to be used for drinking or food preparation, as well as all sinks, faucets and water sources in classrooms, restrooms, and staff areas.

Since lead is tasteless, odorless and colorless in drinking water, testing is the only way to learn whether lead is present and it provides us the opportunity to make improvements as necessary. Because of the known risks of lead exposure to children, especially those younger than six years of age, EGLE and MDHHS strongly advocate that schools and child care centers take measures to ensure drinking and cooking water does not exceed 5 parts per billion (5ppb or 0.005mg/L). TCAPS is committed to achieving the lowest possible levels of lead and takes very seriously the risks associated with lead exposure.

Testing Results

An initial plumbing assessment was conducted at Traverse City High School (TCHS) on June 17, 2023, and was followed by an onsite sampling of all water access points by a MDHHS representative on July 27, 2023. The collected water samples were then sent to the Michigan Department of EGLE for laboratory testing.

The results of TCHS' testing were recently made available to the district. Laboratory analysis indicated that there were several water access points that tested above the 5 ppb threshold.

How Lead Enters Our Water

Lead is rarely found in the source water; rather, it enters the drinking water primarily as a result of corrosion, or wearing away of piping, faucets, fixtures and other plumbing materials. Water that remains in pipes over a weekend, over a vacation, or over an extended period of time, and is in contact with lead containing material, may contain higher levels of lead. Per EGLE and MDHHS staff, the most common source of lead in school/child care center water sources results from stagnant (or standing) water that remains in contact with brass fittings and fixtures that are not regularly used or flushed. TCAPS has not been able to run a child care program at Traverse City High School for several years so many of the water access points have gone unused for long periods of time. Due to that fact, it is not unreasonable to expect that some fixtures would have detectable amounts of lead present. Understanding that was a possibility is one of the reasons we elected to have testing completed at Traverse City High School.

Prior to 2014, the federally permissible level of lead in brass plumbing fittings and fixtures was up to 8%. After 2014, the federally permissible level was reduced to 0.25%. Therefore, it is the goal of TCAPS to keep our children and staff as safe as possible and to immediately reduce possible exposure to lead by eliminating detectable lead at all identified water access points through corrective measures.

Corrective Actions

Immediate actions TCAPS has taken:

- Signage posted at specific water access points advising water not to be used for drinking; to be used for handwashing/cleaning purposes only.
- Certain faucets and fixtures have been taken out of service until remedied.
- Ordered threaded lead removal filters to be installed where needed for specific water access points.

Corrective actions to be conducted in the near future include:

- Replace water access point fittings and fixtures in locations where water is needed.
- Remove water access points in locations where water may no longer be needed.
- Educate students and staff regarding the importance of letting water run for 30 seconds.
- Clean aerators and screens more frequently.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive district water system flushing plan.
- Partner with EGLE and MDHHS to retest after corrective actions are completed. Typically occurs within 6-12 months after initial testing.

For More Information

To review TCHS' test result or for questions, please contact Tyson Burch at 231.933.1933 or burchty@tcaps.net. Please read this notice and for more information on reducing lead exposure, go to www.michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe. For additional information regarding the EGLE Water Quality Safety initiative, contact Holly Gohlke, School Drinking Water Coordinator (EGLE), at gohlkeh@mighigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Tyson Burch
Director of Transportation & Facilities
Traverse City Area Public Schools

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