



For Immediate Release:
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**LWD exceeds EPA lead level by one sample;
result requires public education program**

LITTLETON – Of 20 routine water samples taken in September, 3 exceeded the lead level allowed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which permits only 2 samples to be in exceedance. As a result, the Littleton Water Department (LWD) was directed to step up its corrosion control efforts – which it did immediately – and to launch a public education program – now underway – on the dangers of lead in drinking water.

While LWD treats the water to make it less corrosive, changes in flow patterns and water main breaks associated with the Goldsmith St. reconstruction project in the late summer made the department's treatment efforts less than optimal. General Manager Savas Danos said that he believes that the heavy construction activity required for the new water main installation, which included side street service tie-ins, created changes in pressure and flow that likely caused the lead result. Spot testing since September has shown lead corrosion to be reduced and our system to again be in compliance.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) requires public water systems that exceed the lead action level, which is 15 parts per billion, to provide this notification to customers. Lead is a health concern and is commonly found in the environment, most typically in lead-based paint. It can also be found in water, though at much lower levels. Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters the body, damaging the brain and kidneys, and interfering with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen throughout the body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children and pregnant women.

Water provided by LWD is lead-free when it leaves our production wells. However, lead can get into tap water through home service piping, lead solder used in plumbing and some brass fixtures. Even though the use of lead solder was banned in 1986, it may be present in some older homes. The corrosion of these lead-based materials can add lead to tap water, particularly if it sits for a long time in the pipes before use. Water that has been sitting in household pipes for several hours, such as early in the morning or after returning from work or school, is more likely to contain lead. At first draw, it is always a good idea to run the water until it is consistently cold, about 15 to 20 seconds, before drinking or cooking with it. This process flushes water that may contain lead from the pipes.

For customers interested in testing their homes for lead, please contact our office at 978-540-2222. We can recommend state certified laboratories and advise as to approximate costs, typically between \$10 and \$50. Parents concerned about their children should ask their health care provider for a blood lead level test.

LWD is committed to continuing its rigorous sampling, monitoring, reporting and public education campaign. A brochure on the topic, “Important Information About Lead in Drinking Water,” has been mailed to all water customers, has been posted on our website, www.lelwd.com, and is available at our offices, the Board of Health office, the Town Clerk’s office, the school department’s offices and the library. Those with specific questions or concerns are encouraged to contact the Water Department at 978-540-2222.

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