
Lead in Drinking Water

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A great deal of attention has recently been focused on the public water system that serves Washington D.C. because of elevated levels of lead in its finished water. In 2002, the 90th percentile lead level in the system went from 8 parts per billion (ppb) to 75 ppb, with more than half of the collected samples, exceeding the lead action level of 15 ppb. The 90th percentile lead levels for the two monitoring periods in 2003 were 40 ppb and 63 ppb respectively. While the specific cause is still under investigation, a number of coincidental factors could have contributed to these significant increases, including disinfection practices when the system switched to chloramination. Of particular concern is evidence to suggest that first draw samples may not be indicative of the highest potential exposures in homes served by lead service lines.

This well publicized incident has caused EPA to begin a national re-evaluation of the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR), especially relating to compliance. EPA has requested that States submit their public water system 90th percentile lead levels to help EPA determine whether the Washington

D.C. experience is isolated to Washington D.C. or reflective of a nationwide problem. The Bureau of Water Supply Protection is ensuring that 90th percentile lead level data for all of New York's public water systems are provided to EPA.

We will continue to respond to EPA's requests and monitor EPA's actions regarding any revisions to the LCR. For now, however, you should be asking the following questions about your public water system:

- Is your public water system in compliance with the LCR?
 - Are your LCR monitoring locations appropriate?
 - Do you collect the number of samples at the frequency that meets the LCR?
 - Are your corrosion control treatment efforts effective?
 - Have you recently updated your corrosion control treatment processes or any other treatment that could affect your water chemistry?
 - Have you effectively communicated, as needed, lead concerns or issues with your consumers? 💧
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