

PCC Drinking Water Frequently Asked Questions

Why and When was water testing conducted?

PCC is focused on providing safe and healthful drinking water to all in the academic community. In early September 2016, Portland Community College Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) department conducted a proactive District-wide effort to collect and analyze drinking water samples for the presence of lead. The goal was to create a baseline year and collect one sample of drinking water from each floor of each building that PCC owns.

In 2017, the EH&S department, once again, began testing water in late summer and continues to complete testing during the fall. Results of these initial 2017 tests are included on the Facilities Management Services website and will be updated as more information is obtained. PCC will continue to sample drinking water sources annually to gain a better picture of the District's drinking water profile and to focus on areas where attention may be required.

What process did PCC follow to complete these tests?

The testing efforts were done in accordance with two EPA guidance documents; *Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Non-Residential Buildings* and *3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools*. Drinking water sources including fountains, sinks and water bottle fill stations, were identified on building maps. Sample locations were then selected based on two criteria: accessibility and balancing the mix of various source types. Each year, EH&S evaluates the PCC facilities and water source locations for testing to be conducted.

Why were the initial tests done in unoccupied rooms?

In unoccupied rooms, the water likely sat in the pipes for two to four weeks. Higher lead levels typically are detected in faucets that are not used regularly. The results are not unusual for older buildings, which are more likely to have older plumbing and faucets that contain lead. Lead is most common in plumbing from 1970-1985.

What steps should I consider taking to reduce lead in drinking water?

At home and elsewhere, the Portland Water Bureau recommends:

- If the water has not been used for several hours, run each tap for at least 30 seconds or until it becomes colder before drinking or cooking.
- Use cold, fresh water for cooking and preparing baby formula.
- Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.
- Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not reduce lead.

Is my health at risk if I drink water containing lead?

Lead in water is more of a health risk to babies, children and pregnant women than other adults. Here's more information on lead from Multnomah County:

multco.us/health/lead-poisoning-prevention/what-lead-poisoning
<https://safewater.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/sections/202366328-Lead>

What is the action level (AL) for lead in school drinking water?

EPA recommends that action be taken at a specific outlet when the lead concentration is over 20 parts per billion (ppb). (Note: this is different from the 15 ppb action level required for public water systems).
Source = US EPA

Why are the lead action levels different for public water systems and schools?

The two lead action levels differ because of the different problems they seek to detect and the different monitoring protocols used in the two situations. The 20 ppb action level and sampling protocol for lead in schools is designed to pinpoint specific water fountains and outlets that require remediation (e.g., water cooler replacement). The 15 ppb action level and sampling protocol for public water systems is designed to identify system-wide problems and not problems in single outlets (56 FR 26460, 26479; June 7, 1991).
Source = US EPA

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/Monitoring/Documents/health/lead.pdf>