



# Huron-Superior Catholic

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES ASSESSMENT OF DRINKING WATER IN BOARD FACILITIES

#### **Rationale**

It is likely that the drinking water in the facilities owned by the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will, at some point, contain lead, since it comes into contact with piping, older fixtures, and/or lead soldering.

Ontario law states that all owners and operators of schools, private schools, and child care centres must flush their plumbing regularly and sample their water annually to test for lead. The Ontario government maintains that, “Children up to six years old are more sensitive to the effects of lead because they are still developing and their small bodies can absorb it more easily than adults. Even small amounts of lead can be harmful to young children, infants, and pregnant women.”

It is important to note that a certain amount of lead in drinking water is allowable. The Ontario government indicates that any drinking water that has over 10 µg/L of lead in it is considered to be an exceedance.

#### **Process for Drinking Water Assessments**

- The board procures the services of an environmental consultant or equivalent for a period of time (e.g., from one to three years).
- The consultant conducts drinking water assessments (DWAs) on an annual basis in each school building and in every board building where young children attend regularly (e.g., St. Kateri Outdoor Learning Centre). These assessments are normally conducted during the summer months to allow both standing and flushed samples to be collected.
- A standing sample is one that includes drinking water that has been in the pipes for a period of six or more hours.
- A flushed sample is one that includes drinking water that has been flushed for five minutes and then left for approximately thirty minutes.
- Since Ontario’s Safe Drinking Water Act requires that all schools’ fixtures must be sampled at least once over a three-year period, the consultant assesses one third of each school’s fixtures annually. The consultant must take both standing and flushed samples.

- The consultant and/or lab immediately notifies the board's Plant Department about any exceedances in the standing and/or flushed samples.

### **Process for Communicating an Exceedance in Standing Samples**

In the event that the board's Plant Department learns of an exceedance in a school's standing water sample:

- The Plant Department contacts the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Education, and the local health unit to advise them of the exceedance.
- The Plant Department contacts the school principal and vice-principal, the school superintendent, the supervisor of caretakers, and the director of education with particulars about the exceedance.
- The Plant Department communicates the need for caretakers to flush the affected fixture(s) first thing in the morning on a daily basis.
- In compliance with Ontario's Safe Drinking Water Act, the Plant Department contacts the Communications Department, who posts the notice of exceedance on the school's website. See Appendix A.
- In addition, the principal or vice-principal posts the notice on the doors of the school and makes parents aware of the exceedance via written communication home.
- A lead exceedance in a standing sample does not result in removing the fixture from service. Retesting of fixtures is also not required for lead exceedances for standing samples.

### **Process for Communicating an Exceedance in Flushed Samples**

In the event that the board's Plant Department learns of an exceedance in a school's flushed water sample:

- The Plant Department contacts the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Education, and the local health unit to advise them of the exceedance.
- The Plant Department contacts the school principal and vice-principal, the school superintendent, the supervisor of caretakers, and the director with particulars about the exceedance.
- The Plant Department communicates the need for caretakers to flush all drinking water fixture(s) for five minutes first thing in the morning on a daily basis.

- In compliance with Ontario's Safe Drinking Water Act, the Plant Department contacts the Communications Department, who posts the notice of exceedance on the school's website. See Appendix B.
- In addition, the principal or vice-principal posts the notice on the doors of the school and makes parents aware of the exceedance via written communication home.
- This type of lead exceedance results in removing the fixture from service until the exceedance drops below the acceptable threshold of 10 µg/L. This may be achieved through a retesting of the fixture, the installation of a filter, and/or the replacement of the fixture itself.
- Should it happen that none of these measures lowers the level of lead in the drinking water from that fixture, then the fixture may be removed permanently from use.