



State of Utah

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Department of  
Environmental Quality

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*Executive Director*

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July 18, 2017

Alexa Cunningham  
440 E 100 S  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Dear Superintendent Cunningham,

In January 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sent a letter to all State Superintendents recommending that schools test their drinking water for lead. The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Utah Department of Health (DOH) reached out to several Utah school districts this spring seeking participation in a voluntary pilot study to sample for lead in the drinking water at their schools.

While most of the pilot study test results met federal guidelines, some of the samples showed elevated lead levels. Schools with elevated sample levels are conducting follow-up sampling, and DEQ's Division of Drinking Water (DDW) is verifying the test results.

DEQ does not have the regulatory authority to require testing; it is entirely voluntary. However, like you, we are very invested in the health and well-being of Utah's schoolchildren. That's why we **strongly urge** you to test each of the schools in your district for lead in drinking water. The best way to ensure the health and safety of your children and staff is through sampling the drinking water in each building.

Lead is a significant health concern, particularly for children, whose developing bodies are more susceptible to its harmful effects. Adverse health impacts from lead include damage to the brain and kidneys, reduced IQ and attention span, learning disabilities, poor classroom performance, hyperactivity, behavioral problems, and impaired growth.

While the drinking water provided by your public water supplier is required to meet federal and state lead standards, lead can leach from plumbing materials and fixtures after the water reaches your building and moves through your school's water-distribution system. Because school buildings tend to be larger, it's easier for water to stagnate in the plumbing and increase lead concentrations in the school above levels in the water delivered by the supplier. Testing each school building is necessary to identify and remedy any problems that may exist.

We will be contacting your office shortly to follow up with you regarding this request. We realize that testing is a commitment of your limited time and resources. DEQ's Division of Drinking Water is available to provide you with the technical assistance, guidance, and support you need to test for lead in the drinking water in your schools.

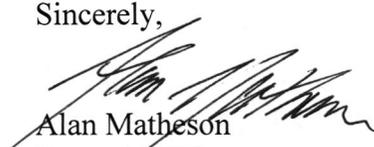
If you would like to sample your school, expedite a meeting or plan to test before the beginning of the school year, please contact Emily Frary at 801-536-0070 or [emilyfrary@utah.gov](mailto:emilyfrary@utah.gov). We can assist you with sampling protocol, help you develop a testing plan to identify and prioritize sampling sites, and provide information about routine, interim, and permanent remedies if you find elevated levels of lead. We ask that you share your sample results with the Division of Drinking Water so we can understand the statewide occurrence level of lead in drinking water and better support your efforts.

If you plan to test after school is in session, we advise you to flush the water lines in each of your buildings entirely, including individual drinking water taps, before school begins. Again, please contact us for instructions on the proper way to flush your buildings.

If you find elevated lead levels in the drinking water at your school that require significant resources to resolve, we will work with you to identify funding sources to correct the problem. Remediation can be as simple as switching out a faucet or as complex as rerouting your service lines. In any event, the State will stand with you throughout this process. Protecting the health of our children and school staff is our top priority.

We are confident that you recognize the value of protecting our most precious resource — the children of Utah. We commit to partner with you as we look into this potential threat to their well-being. Thank you for all you do to protect and develop our next generation.

Sincerely,



Alan Matheson  
Executive Director