

ADEQ Study Confirms Public School Drinking Water Below Established Testing Levels

Screening results verify lead uncommon and 96 percent of fixtures deemed protective

Phoenix, AZ (December 6, 2017) – Arizona’s public school drinking water systems were below established testing levels for lead contamination, according to just-completed Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) testing. The study used a more conservative standard for examining potential lead contamination than is established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

[View Screening Program Web Page >](#)

The testing, which began in January due to nationwide concern stemming from the situation in Flint, Mich., found that 96 percent of all public school district water fixtures screened for lead were within conservative screening levels. State agencies and partners are actively working to address the fixtures with elevated levels – many of which were from non-drinking water sources.

“ADEQ is proud to stand with the many people, including our partners at the public school districts, who helped complete this proactive screening program in record time,” said Trevor Baggio, Director, ADEQ Water Quality Division. “Protecting public health, especially the health of our children, is a primary part of our mission,” added Baggio.

The data is presented in [Arizona’s Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program report](#), which details the collaboration with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the Arizona School Facilities Board (SFB), and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), and support from numerous county health and municipal partners and public school district superintendents.

Arizona is the only state that has successfully completed a proactive, comprehensive and voluntary screening program for lead in public school district drinking water and completed it within six months’ time. Report screening results represent:

- 16,125 total samples
- 14,782 fixtures
- 11,585 buildings
- 1,427 schools
- 180 public school districts

The School Facilities Board is actively working with public school districts to replace the small number of fixtures with confirmed elevated lead levels. ADEQ is coordinating with these schools to sample and verify that fixture replacements solve the elevated lead levels in drinking water.

“As the SFB continues the program through completion of corrective action, we’d like to thank ADEQ for identifying those school buildings with elevated lead levels. It is through great partnerships such as this, that State resources, coupled with community support, can be leveraged to ensure safe learning environments where Arizona children thrive,” said Paul Bakalis, Executive Director of the Arizona School Facilities Board.

About The Arizona Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program

To ensure overall success and maximum reach for the screening program, ADEQ and its partners designed the proactive program to best work with and support public school districts' participation. School faculty and staff were given all the necessary tools and resources to communicate, conduct, track, and provide the screening program information to parents and students at no cost.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) technical guidance specifies 20 parts lead per billion parts water (ppb) as the action level for screening lead in schools. ADEQ chose a more conservative screening level, 15 ppb, which effectively detected an additional 124 fixtures that would have been missed using EPA's 20 ppb level.

About ADEQ

Under the Environmental Quality Act of 1986, the Arizona State Legislature established the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality in 1987 as the state agency for protecting and enhancing public health and the environment of Arizona. For more information, visit <http://www.azdeq.gov/>.

###

Contact

ADEQ Public Information Officer
602-771-4192
sn3@azdeq.gov