January 17, 2017

Dear parent/guardian,

In the past two months, Rockford Public Schools’ facilities team has worked with the City of Rockford Water Division to test schools for the levels of lead in drinking fountains, sinks and other water sources. The safety of our students and staff is a top priority. That’s why we’re taking action ahead of pending legislation that requires these tests.

We have initially tested several water sources in each school. Updated legislation mandates tests for all drinking fountains and sink faucets used for cooking or drinking, so additional tests and results are pending. We want to be transparent in this process and are notifying families of their school’s test process and results. If we find something or have an issue, we want you to know what we’re doing to fix it.

The Environmental Protection Agency says water that is 15 parts per billion or higher requires action. We’re responding by immediately shutting off any fixtures that test at or above that threshold. Affected water fixtures will be repaired and/or replaced, and they will not be available for student or staff use until they retest below that threshold.

Johnson Elementary School: Four fixtures required action: Classroom sinks that tested at 16, 27, 27 and 34 parts per billion, respectively. For some context, the highest level found in Virginia Tech researchers’ sample of homes in Flint, Mich., registered at 13,000 parts per billion.

Please see the list below of Frequently Asked Questions. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Todd Schmidt
RPS 205 Chief Operations Officer
815-966-3066

FAQs

Why is water being tested? Environmental organizations are pushing legislation that will require Illinois elementary schools to test for high levels of lead in drinking foundations, sinks and other water sources. We’re testing our water ahead of the deadline stated in the proposed legislation.

Are all schools being tested? What’s the timeline? Based on pending legislation, schools built before 1987 that educate K-5th grade must be tested by Dec. 31, 2017. In RPS 205, that includes 30 schools. We expect tests to wrap up in the coming months. Schools built after 1987 through 2000 must be tested by Dec. 31, 2018. District officials are planning those additional tests.

How does the testing process work? RPS 205 facilities staff are taking water samples and sending them to PDC Laboratories, Inc. in Peoria, an environmental laboratory certified for drinking water, wastewater, hazardous and solid wastes through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Taking water samples does not disrupt the school day.

Will schools be retested for high levels of lead? Yes. Pending legislation mandates annual tests.

What if I want to have my child tested for lead poisoning or high levels of lead? Please contact your child’s primary care physician or the Winnebago County Health Department.