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News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Regional Water Providers Found Elevated Levels of Lead in Tests at High-Risk Homes**

Twice a year, drinking water utilities test high-risk homes, those known to have lead solder in their home plumbing, for lead levels, testing water samples which have been standing in those pipes for several hours. Recent drinking water samples in those homes collected by regional water providers in the Bull Run service area show an elevated presence of lead in 14 of the 112 high risk homes tested. The Portland Water Bureau (PWB) has been treating Bull Run drinking water to make it less corrosive by raising the pH of the water, but in this round of tests the lead levels were 17 parts per billion, over the action level of 15 parts per billion that triggers educational outreach (including this press release) and corrective actions.

The major source of lead in tap water in Portland is the corrosive action of water on building plumbing components that contain lead, such as faucets and lead-based solder. However, by far the biggest sources of exposure to lead are from lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil. Customers are encouraged to contact the LeadLine at [www.leadline.org](http://www.leadline.org) or 503-988-4000 to learn more about reducing exposure to all sources of lead.

More than 19,000 children have been tested for lead in Multnomah County in the past three years and only 184 were confirmed with elevated blood lead levels. None of the investigations identified water as the main source of exposure.

There are simple ways to reduce exposure to lead in water. If water has been standing in pipes for several hours, consumers can reduce lead exposure from home plumbing by running their water until it is noticeably cold. Hot water is more corrosive than cold water, so it is more likely to contain lead – that's why it is important to use only cold water for cooking, drinking, and particularly when making baby formula or juice. Anyone concerned about lead exposure can test their home plumbing for free by contacting the LeadLine at [www.leadline.org](http://www.leadline.org) or 503-988-4000.

“Ideally, all plumbing fixtures would be lead-free, but they aren't,” says PWB Administrator Mike Stuhr. “This is why we are informing our customers of these test results, and providing them with the tools to protect themselves and their families.”

Since 2014 Portland has been looking at the causes of lead corrosion in our system. As the study finishes in the next few months, we anticipate bringing a recommendation on ways to further reduce exposure to lead in water for City Council consideration.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take now to reduce your exposure to lead in your water:

- 1. Run your water to flush the lead out.** If the water has not been used for several hours, run each tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes or until it becomes colder before drinking or cooking. This simple step can reduce lead in water up to 90% or more.

2. **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.
3. **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
4. **Test your child for lead.** Ask your physician or call the LeadLine to find out how to have your child tested for lead. A blood lead level test is the only way to know if your child is being exposed to lead.
5. **Test your water for lead.** Call the **LeadLine** at **503-988-4000** to find out how to get a FREE lead-in-water test.
6. **Consider using a filter.** Check whether it reduces lead – not all filters do. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions to protect water quality. Contact NSF International at **800-NSF-8010** or [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) for information on performance standards for water filters.
7. **Regularly clean your faucet aerator.** Particles containing lead from solder or household plumbing can become trapped in your faucet aerator. Regularly cleaning every few months will remove these particles and reduce your exposure to lead.
8. **Consider buying low-lead fixtures.** As of January, 2014 all pipes, fittings and fixtures are required to contain less than 0.25% lead. When buying new fixtures, consumers should seek out those with the lowest lead content.

To get your water tested for lead or for more information on reducing lead exposure around your home or building and the health effects of lead, contact the **LeadLine** at [www.leadline.org](http://www.leadline.org) or **503-988-4000**.

Please click [here](#) for Frequently Asked Questions about the October 2016 exceedance of the Lead & Copper Rule.

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