Testing Drinking Water for Lead and Copper

A new Colorado law requires all licensed childcare programs and public schools serving preschool through eighth-grade students to test their drinking water for lead and act when results show levels of lead at or above 5 parts per billion (ppb). The goal of this law is to lower children's exposure to lead, a toxic metal.

To meet these requirements, Weld County Re1 School District is testing lead at all water fixtures used for drinking and cooking in schools.

Weld Re1 staff will take samples of water at all our elementary schools and send them to the state health department for testing by May 31 this year. Weld Re1 is required to send samples from all middle schools by Nov. 30, 2024, meeting the requirements of Colorado House Bill 22-1358: Clean Water in Schools and Child Care Centers (signed into law in June 2022).

Water samples from schools are sent to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, which tests the samples and notifies the district of results, identifying samples that require the district to take action.

Weld Re1's Response to Test Results

Safety is a top priority. For fixtures where lead is found below 5 ppb, Weld Re1 continues routine practices to further lower potential exposure. **When test results indicate higher lead levels (at or above 5ppb), Weld Re1 immediately takes this action:**

- Communicates to the principal, staff and families about the results and action being taken at their school,
- Has maintenance staff turn off affected fixtures at the site,
- Posts signs required by law in English, and Spanish on the affected fixtures *(see below)*, and

Long-Term Solutions to Reduce Exposure to Lead

Schools/childcare facilities that have lead in drinking water above 5 parts per billion (ppb) must take action to reduce exposure to lead. **In Weld Re1, when lead is found at or above 5 ppb, the fixture is shut off while a more long-term solution is underway. These solutions may include:**

- Permanently removing the fixture from service
- Designating a fixture as "not for drinking"
- Replacing drinking water faucets or fountains
- Installing filters

- Replacing pipes

Weld Re1 follows CDPHE's protocol for required follow-up testing and remediation. The results of second-round testing are used to determine what long-term fixes are needed. Weld Re1 will complete any required remediation.

School water sample results are available on the CDPHE Test and Fix Water for Kids website. Results may take up to 30 days to be posted. Please know that Weld Re1 will continue to keep school communities updated throughout the process of addressing concerns at their school.

Lead Exposure and Children

Lead is a toxic metal that is especially harmful to young children. The degree of risk depends on the child's total exposure to lead from all environmental sources – air, soil, dust, food, paint, consumer products, and water. Typically, old or corroded lead plumbing or old brass fixtures can contribute to increased lead levels in drinking water.

If you are concerned about your child's exposure you can have their blood tested. Please contact your health provider to learn more about testing your child's blood for lead. *More information is available on the CDPHE lead-testing website.>>*

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are schools being tested for lead?

A new Colorado law, HB 22-1358, requires school districts in Colorado to test schools serving preschool through fifth-grades before May 31 this year and all schools serving sixth- through eighth-grades before the end of November 2024. Only lead testing is required by the new state law.

What levels are considered "elevated?"

The state considers 5 parts per billion (ppb) or more an elevated level of lead (the state rounds up any measure at or above 4.5 ppb). This differs from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard, which considers 15 ppb an elevated level of lead.

If schools show elevated levels of lead, what does Weld Re1 do?

Weld Re1 retest's locations in any schools that show elevated levels of lead with flush samples, per the state health department. A flush sample involves turning on the water for a minimum of 30 seconds before collecting a sample to determine if the source of the elevated levels are coming from the fixture or the plumbing. Depending on the results, Weld Re1 will remediate as

soon as possible. Remediation measures may include replacing fixtures, plumbing below the fixtures, and/or adding a filter.

Are schools tested again after Weld Re1 takes action to address issues?
Yes, testing is required within 90 days after remediation to determine if the district's actions have reduced lead to below state action level of 5 parts per billion. If levels remain elevated, further testing and remediation will be done.

Can you tell me when my school's results will come back from the state?
Unfortunately, no. Weld Re1 does not know when results for each school tested will be released. CDPHE posts test results on its website as the agency makes them available: cdphe.colorado.gov/environment/lead-safety/test-and-fix-water-for-kids.

What are the health effects of lead?
Lead is a toxic metal that is especially harmful to young children. The degree of risk depends on the child's total exposure to lead from all environmental sources – air, soil, dust, food, paint, consumer products, and water. Typically, old or corroded lead plumbing or old brass fixtures can contribute to increased lead levels in drinking water.

If you are concerned about your child's exposure you can have their blood tested. Please contact your health provider to learn more about testing your child's blood for lead. For more information please visit the CDPHE lead-testing website.

Should I seek testing for lead for myself or my child? Will Weld Re1 pay for lead testing for my student?
Please reach out to a medical provider to discuss any concerns you have regarding your or your child's health. Weld Re1 is unable to provide medical advice or testing. As a first step, you might consider calling Colorado Poison Control: 303-389-1837 to discuss your questions and concerns. This is a free option.

Weld Re1 is not paying or reimbursing families who choose to have their student(s) tested for lead levels. Please reach out to a medical provider to discuss any concerns you have regarding your or your child's health. Weld Re1 is unable to provide medical advice or testing.

Where can children get drinking water at school?

Drinking fountains that do not have elevated levels of lead remain on and available to students and staff. Water bottle-filling stations are available in school hallways. Depending on the unique circumstances within a school and the impact of testing and remediation, the district may also provide bottled water.