May 17, 2016

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Re: Voluntary Lead Testing of Drinking Water in Schools

Dear School Superintendent:

Suffolk County Department of Health Services is reaching out to school superintendents across Suffolk County to provide guidance from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) regarding a voluntary program to test drinking water for lead in school buildings. Lead has been used in plumbing materials and fixtures for decades. Several factors can cause this metal to slowly release into water and cause exposure at drinking water taps such as faucets and drinking water fountains. Children may also be exposed to lead from paint, dust, toys, soil, air, food, spices, as well as drinking water. The USEPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person’s total exposure to lead.

The USEPA has indicated that young children, infants, and fetuses are particularly vulnerable to lead. Low levels of exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells.

We encourage you to review and follow the USEPA’s guidance document entitled “3T’s for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools”, which can be found on-line at: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/reducing-lead-drinking-water-schools-revised-technical-guidance>. This document provides guidance on testing lead in drinking water and what to do if lead is detected above the action level. If you have any questions regarding lead in drinking water, please feel free to contact our office at (631) 852-5810. If parents are concerned about their children’s blood lead levels or exposure to lead in their home environment, please advise them to contact our Childhood Lead Prevention Program at (631) 854-0215.

Very truly yours,



Jason R. Hime, P.E.

Associate Public Health Engineer

Supervisor, Bureau of Drinking Water