PORTLAND WATER BUREAU
FROM FOREST TO FAUCET

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News Release

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Recent Monitoring Results Found Elevated Levels of Lead in Tests at Some High-Risk Homes

The Portland Water Bureau received results from its twice-a-year testing for lead in water at high-risk homes, those known to have lead solder in their home plumbing. Test results showed that the lead levels were 17 parts per billion, over the action level of 15 parts per billion. In the most recent round of testing, 18 of 134 high-risk homes had lead-in-water levels above the action level. When more than 10 percent of these homes are above the action level, the Portland Water Bureau (PWB) is required to notify the public and implement corrective actions.

Fortunately, there are very few sources of lead in Portland's drinking water system. In Portland, lead in water primarily comes from home plumbing such as faucets or lead-based solder. Lead in plumbing can be released by the corrosive action of water when it is in contact with these lead sources. The bureau treats Bull Run drinking water to make it less corrosive by raising the pH of the water.

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. The primary sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil.

"Ideally, all of our customers' household plumbing fixtures would be lead-free, but they aren't," said Portland Water Bureau Director Michael Stuhr. "This is why we are making improvements to our system to further reduce the potential for lead at our customers' taps."

On March 1, 2017, Portland City Council authorized the Portland Water Bureau to begin implementation of improved corrosion control treatment to further reduce the levels of lead in drinking water. This decision was based on a corrosion control study indicating that additional treatment is the most effective means of further reducing lead in water from home and building plumbing. Improved treatment is anticipated to be in place by Spring 2022.

The Portland Water Bureau most recently exceeded the action level for lead in Fall of 2016, when 14 of 112 homes had lead-in-water levels above the action level. In response, the bureau notified its customers and reached out to those most at-risk, as it is doing again now.

The current test results are part of a regional monitoring program that includes the following drinking water providers: Portland Water Bureau, Burlington, Lorna Portland Water, Palatine Hill, Pleasant Home, Raleigh, Valley View and West Slope water districts.

The Portland Water Bureau and regional providers recommend the following easy steps that customers can take now to reduce exposure to lead in water:

1. **Run 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 percent 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 children for lead**. Ask a physician or call the LeadLine to find out how to have aa child tested for lead. A blood lead level test is the only way to know if a 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** for information on performance standards for water filters.

7. **Regularly clean the faucet aerator.** Particles containing lead from solder or household plumbing can become trapped in faucet aerators. Regularly cleaning every few months will remove these particles and reduce the exposure to lead.

8. **Consider buying low-lead fixtures.** As of 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 or 503-988-4000.**

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