

WAC 170-300-0235: Safe Water Sources Tip Sheet

Why is Lead in Early Learning Programs of Concern?

Lead is a heavy metal that is harmful to human health when ingested or inhaled. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe. Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of lead. Even at low levels of exposure to lead, children may experience lower IQ levels, hearing loss, reduced attention span, learning disabilities, hyperactivity, poor classroom performance or other harmful physical and behavioral effects. See WHO information on lead exposure: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>.

What is the Governor's Directive on Lead?

In May 2016, Governor Jay Inslee issued Directive 16-06 in response to growing concerns about lead in drinking water in schools and homes across the state. However, he also recognized that water is not the primary source of lead exposure for children. In addition to asking for recommendations to reduce exposure through drinking water, he also asked the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to lead the state to reduce exposure to lead and other environmental hazards where children live, learn and play. Additional information on the Directive can be found: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/300-018.pdf>.

What does this Directive require the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to do?

The Directive required DCYF to collaborate with DOH and the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) to determine if there is a need to create policies that require child care providers to evaluate their programs for lead exposure. DOH recommended that DCYF develop new rules to reduce children's exposure to lead and, in response, rules were established that require providers to test water sources for lead contamination. See WAC 170-300-0235, -0400, and -0410. These rules went into effect on May 27, 2017.

Where can I find additional information on lead?

- DOH provides resources on lead:
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/InfantsandChildren/ProtectKidsfromToxicChemicals/PreventLeadPoisoning>
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides information about lead in drinking water: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>

Who can I contact for technical assistance?

The DOH Office of Drinking Water has technical experts assigned to the following geographical regions of Washington state:

- **Northwest Regional Operations:** (253) 395-6750
- **Southwest Regional Operations:** (360) 236-3030
- **Eastern Regional Operations:** (509) 329-2100

Is there a list of certified water laboratories?

The Washington State Department of Ecology maintains a list of certified labs:

https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/laboratorysearch/appfiles/DWLABs_WABYCounty.pdf

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Which early learning programs must test water for lead and copper?

All applicants for licensing and all licensed home and center early learning providers must test their program water supply used for drinking, cooking, or preparing infant formula or food for lead and copper. Testing must be done by a Washington state certified laboratory accredited by department of Ecology. See WAC 170-300-0235(2).

What fixtures need to be tested, when and how often?

All fixtures used to obtain water for drinking, cooking or preparing food or infant formula must be tested prior to licensing for applicants. Providers are required to retest their water supply for lead and copper at least once every six years thereafter. See WAC 170-300-0235(2).

How do I collect water samples?

The EPA provides water sampling guidance online: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-schools-and-child-care-facilities>

What is the current EPA action level for lead and copper?

Current EPA action levels are online: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-and-copper-rule>

Where do I keep the water test results?

A copy of the test results must be kept on the licensed premises. Providers are not required to post water testing results.

What must I do if the test results are at or above the current EPA action level?

Specific steps to promote health and safety and mitigate water contamination for water supplies are listed in WAC 170-300-0235(2)(a) through (e).

What are the private well requirements?

WAC 170-300-0235 requires early learning programs that receive water from a private well to test their water supply for coliform bacteria and nitrates in addition to testing for lead and copper. See WAC 170-300-0235(3). The minimum standards for constructing and maintaining wells in Washington State are detailed in chapter 173-160 WAC lists, which can be found here: <http://leg.wa.gov/CodeReviser/WACArchive/Documents/2013/WAC-173-160-CHAPTER.pdf>

How often should private well water be tested?

Well water must be tested at least annually for coliform bacteria and nitrates. Testing for lead and copper must be done according to the directions above. Testing must be done by a Washington State certified laboratory accredited by the Department of Ecology.

How do I determine if coliform bacteria and nitrate tests are satisfactory?

Negative test for **coliform bacteria** is considered satisfactory. If **nitrate test** is less than 10 parts per million (ppm) and greater than five ppm, the water must be retested within six months.

What steps must I take to address unsatisfactory test results?

Specific steps to promote health and safety and mitigate water contamination of private wells are listed in WAC 170-300-0235(3)(b) through (d), and 0235(4).

