



Superintendent's Circular

NUMBER:
FMT-20
Version 01

DRINKING WATER ACCESS POLICY

This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

The Drinking Water Access Policy is for all water units used for drinking and food preparation.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Boston Public Schools (BPS) will safely bring online and maintain all school building water units used for drinking and food preparation.

BACKGROUND

By law, all students must have access to water during meals and throughout the school day, at no cost. BPS follows the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Massachusetts Legislation (H 4459) 223(g), and Massachusetts Uniform State Plumbing Code (248 MASS. CODE REGS. § 10.10, Table 1 (2011)).

Boston Water & Sewer Commission (<http://www.bwsc.org/>) is the Public Water System (PWS) that supplies potable water to BPS. BPS also upholds a bottled water contract.

BPS, like all school districts, is responsible for following the guidance of the US Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA). The

LCCA directs the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its state designees to assist school system administrators, schools, and programs, to identify and reduce or eliminate lead contamination in their facilities' drinking water. The LCCA is an assistance-based, non-regulatory program.

As a federal designee and the responsible Massachusetts agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is responsible for educating school/facility officials about the LCCA and coordinating statewide efforts to reduce or eliminate lead in drinking water at schools and childcare facilities. The Massachusetts program includes both lead and copper because the same mechanism that leaches lead from plumbing into drinking can also leach copper. Additional information on the MassDEP Drinking Water Program is available at <https://www.mass.gov/lead-in-drinking-water>.

POLICY

In accordance with the EPA's revised *3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Child Care Facilities Toolkit* (<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit>), and the subsequent recommendations from MassDEP, BPS is committed to the following drinking water access policy:

1. Annually test all water units used for drinking and food preparation.
2. Deactivate any unit with test results above or equal to 15 parts per billion (ppb) for lead and or 1,300 ppb for copper and implement remediation actions to reduce those levels to the lowest possible concentrations. Remediation actions

may include, but not be limited to, daily flushing, installation of filtration systems, and/or replacement of drinking water fixtures, plumbing fixtures, and/or piping.

3. Continue to use units with test results between 1 ppb and 15 ppb for lead, while implementing short and long-term remediation actions to reduce those levels to the lowest possible concentrations.
4. Communicate all test results and subsequent actions.
5. Provide bottled water and cups for any deactivated, offline schools and any online schools that lack access to fountains in food service and medical areas.
6. Provide drinking water access training for relevant BPS staff in accordance with this policy.

DEFINITIONS

- *EPA's 3 T's for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water: Training, Testing, and Taking Action*, [3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water | US EPA](#).
- *Deactivation Level, Copper*: $\geq 1,300$ ppb
- *Deactivation Level, Lead*: ≥ 15 ppb
- *Water Unit*: Any water fountain or food service equipment/fixture (e.g., food preparation sink faucets, kettles, tilt skillets, etc.)
- *Online School*: A school building supplied by online water units as its primary source of drinking water. (see definition: Online Water Unit)
- *Online Water Unit*: An active water unit, with verified lead and copper concentrations below deactivation levels, for

drinking and/or food preparation. Concentrations are verified by the required testing.

- *Offline School:* A school building provided with a commercial bottled water supply as its only source of drinking water.
- *Offline Water Unit:* A deactivated water unit supplied by the PWS for drinking and/or food preparation with verified lead and or copper concentrations above deactivation levels.
- *Activation:* A change in a water unit's (e.g., water fountain or food service equipment and fixtures) status from offline to online due to initial installation or remediation action(s) and subsequent testing demonstrating the lowest possible concentrations for lead and copper.
- *Deactivation:* A change in a water unit's (e.g., water fountain or food service equipment and fixtures) status from online to offline. Any online water unit with elevated lead or copper levels above deactivation levels will be deactivated. Deactivated units will remain deactivated until remediation action(s) have been completed and the remediated unit has been re-tested with subsequent test levels at the lowest possible concentrations for lead and copper.
- *Flushing:* Turning on a plumbing cold water fixture(s) and letting the cold water run continuously for a specified time frame in accordance with MassDEP protocols.
- *Daily Flushing:* For high use areas, such as fixtures used for food preparation (e.g., food preparation sink faucets, kettles, tilt skillets, etc.), BPS will adhere to MassDEP's flushing guidance for schools, available at [Fact Sheet – Flushing: A Short-Term Solution to Reduce Lead and Copper](#). For any

online water fountain, it is recommended that the drinker first let the water run for 5-10 seconds before drinking, and this is only for precautionary measures as lead and copper concentrations were already verified to be below deactivation levels. For directly plumbed water units where flushing is not feasible (e.g., combination ovens, steamers, ice makers, etc.), filters have already been or will be installed.

- *Activation Flushing*: BPS will adhere to a minimum flushing time of 20 minutes for activation of offline water units, per the activation protocol.
- *Remediation Action(s)*: Shall include, but are not limited to replacement, repair, maintenance, filtration, and/or flushing to reduce the concentration of lead and copper to the lowest possible concentrations.

REQUIREMENTS

Per the Annual Testing Protocol (pg. 8), BPS Facilities Management Environmental Division will annually test all online water units used for drinking and food preparation for lead and copper concentrations. BPS annual testing will adhere to MassDEP's guidance for sample collection procedures for schools and early education childcare facilities, available at the following link: [Sampling for Lead and Copper at Schools and Childcare Facilities | Mass.gov](#). This testing protocol does not include any sinks used for facility cleaning or handwashing, including but not limited to those found in utility rooms, bathrooms, locker rooms, kitchens, science labs, prep rooms, and classrooms. These sinks are not to be used for drinking or any other consumptive purpose

such as food preparation, and signage shall be posted as such.

- *In cases where concentrations of lead and or copper in any water unit do not exceed the lead/copper deactivation levels*, no deactivation is needed. Test results will be available at: [BPS Water / Boston School Water Quality](#). Units with results between 1 ppb and 15 ppb for lead will continue to be used, while BPS Facilities Management implements short or long-term remediation actions to reduce those levels to the lowest possible concentrations.
- *In cases where concentrations of lead and or copper in water units used for drinking or food preparation exceed the lead/copper deactivation levels*, BPS Facilities Management and BPS Communications will enact the Deactivation Protocol (pg. 10), which requires BPS Facilities Management Plumbing Division to immediately deactivate only the impacted online water unit(s), and place signage that says "Water Shut Off. Do NOT turn on without Facilities Management or FNS (Food and Nutrition Services) Approval." For water units used for drinking, the units will also be tagged with a "DO NOT DRINK".
- *In cases where water sources are not tested for lead or copper* (because these units are not designated for drinking or food preparation), signage has been conspicuously placed (as of September 1, 2016) near that source stating: "WATER FROM SINKS WILL BE USED FOR WASHING ONLY." Pictures will be used in locations as needed. BPS principals/heads of school will designate a responsible person to check and ensure this signage is posted in bathrooms and classrooms on a regular basis. BPS Facilities Management will provide the signage and can be contacted

for additional or replacement signage.

- BPS will follow the Activation Protocol (pg. 12) to safely bring online school building water units used for drinking, food preparation, or medical services.
- BPS will follow the Flushing Protocol (pg. 13) as one remediation practice for reducing lead levels to the lowest possible concentrations.
- BPS Facilities Management will follow the Filter and Filtered Water Fountain Standard Operating Procedure and Maintenance Protocol (pg. 13) to manage all filtered water fountains and filters.
- BPS Facilities Management will follow the Bottled Water Protocol (pg. 16), which includes providing bottled water, bottled water units, and cups for all offline schools, and for any medical or food service areas that lack access to tap water units in any online school. BPS Facilities Management will manage and track all bottled water accounts.
- BPS Facilities Management will provide water testing results and any recent water-related information to BPS Communications for the BPS water webpage, <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/water> and annual notices to the BPS community.
- Heads of school/principals will develop a school-based plan for ensuring bottled water and cups are available continuously, without disruption, on all water coolers throughout the entire school day, including during mealtimes. Schools are responsible for calling Facilities Management to order water and cups, if running low before the existing, regular water delivery schedule.

- BPS Department of Health & Wellness will educate, promote, and communicate the importance and benefits of drinking water and collaborate with Facilities Management and Food and Nutrition Services to communicate all aspects of this policy to school leaders, staff, students, and school community.
- In alignment with BuildBPS, BPS will integrate water infrastructure improvements into routine renovations and capital planning and develop a water infrastructure plan for schools that are offline with a goal of bringing all BPS schools online.

IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOLS: TESTING, MAINTENANCE, & ACCESS

Annual Testing Protocol

BPS annual testing will adhere to MassDEP's guidance for Sample Collection Procedures for schools and early education childcare facilities, available at the following link: [Sampling for Lead and Copper at Schools and Childcare Facilities | Mass.gov](#).

How to Collect a First Draw Sample

1. Collect the sample before any water has been used. Water units must be unused for at least eight (8) hours, but not more than eighteen (18) hours, before testing.
2. Sampler must wear chemical resistant Nitrile gloves while sampling.
3. Complete the sample collection form during all sampling (Sample Custody Log - MA DEP LCCA Program or equivalent).

4. Only use containers (250 milliliter/wide mouth) supplied by a certified laboratory.
5. Containers should not be opened until you are ready to collect the sample.
6. Sampling containers that have been compromised in any way (e.g., by being touched on the threads or the interior surfaces) must not be used.
7. Keep any food and drink away from the sample and its container.
8. If the fixture/faucet has an aerator at the end of the fixture, it should not be removed before taking samples. The sampler should not remove or clean any aerators prior to or during the collection of tap samples. Make sure no water has been withdrawn from the tap or water fountain, as well as from any adjacent taps, before the sample has been collected.
9. Place the container under the water unit that is being tested and collect 250 milliliters (mL) of water.
10. For all water units being tested, make sure you turn on the cold water tap. Open the cold water tap and run it as you would when filling a glass of water.
11. Turn on the water and fill the container without allowing any water to run down the drain or the outsides of the container.
12. Close the container according to the instructions from your certified lab. Tightly cap the sample bottle and place in the sample (shipping) kit provided.
13. Make sure the container is labeled with the same information from your sample collection form (Sample

Custody Log - MA DEP LCCA Program or equivalent).

14. Prepare the container for shipping according to the certified lab's instructions. Ship containers according to the certified lab's instructions.
15. Samples must be delivered and relinquished to a certified lab within 14 (fourteen) days of collection for proper testing.

Deactivation Protocol

1. In cases where concentrations of lead and or copper in any water unit do not exceed the lead/copper deactivation levels, no deactivation is needed. Test results will be available at: <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/water>. Units with results between 1 ppb and 15 ppb for lead will continue to be used, while BPS Facilities Management implements short or long-term remediation actions to reduce those levels to the lowest possible concentrations.
2. In cases where concentrations of lead and or copper in water units used for drinking or food preparation exceed the lead/copper deactivation levels:
 - a. Upon notification from the BPS Sustainability and Environmental Resources Manager, BPS Facilities Management Plumbing Division will immediately deactivate only the impacted online water unit(s), unless otherwise specifically directed. These units will be made offline and tagged "Water Shut Off. Do NOT turn on without Facilities Management or FNS (Food and Nutrition Services) Approval." For water units used for drinking, the units will be tagged with a "DO NOT DRINK". If required, a bottled water unit will be placed

as near as possible to the deactivated unit.

- b. BPS Facilities Management will provide bottled water, bottled water coolers, and cups. One bottled water cooler will be provided for each deactivated water unit (e.g. water fountain) or as necessary to meet 248 CMR 10.00: Uniform State Plumbing Code requirements (See: Table 1: Minimum Facilities For Building Occupancy, available at the following link: 248 CMR 10.00: Uniform state plumbing code). .
 - c. BPS Communications and Facilities Management will immediately implement the Deactivation Communications Protocol (pg. 18).
 - d. BPS Facilities Management Environmental and Plumbing Divisions will inspect the impacted water unit to identify any source or cause of elevation and schedule any remediation action(s).
 - e. The impacted water unit will remain deactivated until remediation actions have been completed and BPS Facilities Management Environmental Division has tested and received three (3) consecutive lead and copper sample results at the lowest possible concentrations.
3. In cases where water sources are not tested for lead or copper (because these units are not designated for drinking or consumption) or levels of lead in water units exceed the lead/copper action level, signage has been conspicuously placed near that source stating: "WATER FROM SINKS WILL BE USED FOR WASHING ONLY."
4. The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) does not

recommend that BPS screen children for lead. If a child is exposed to water containing elevated lead levels, the BPHC recommends that parents consult their child's medical provider to assess whether their child's individual risk warrants blood lead testing. Many healthcare providers, such as MassHealth, cover the cost of lead testing. Families with questions or concerns about costs may contact BPS Health Services at 617-635-6788.

Activation Protocol

1. Upon completion of any water unit's remediation action (e.g., replacement, repair, etc.), Facilities Management Environmental Division will flush each water unit for approximately 20 minutes or more as needed to remove any visual signs of sediment, debris, and rust. BPS will adhere to a minimum flushing time of 20 minutes for activation of offline water units.
2. Eight to eighteen (8-18) hours post flushing, a sample from each water unit will be collected for confirmatory analysis of lead and copper.
3. Repeat step #2 two additional times to conclude three (3) rounds of testing. For the initial activation of a filtered water unit, a sample for coliform will be collected during one of the three rounds of testing (see New England States' Sample Collection & Preservation Guidance Manual For Drinking Water, p. 36, [New England States' Sample Collection & Preservation Guidance Manual for Drinking Water, Revision 5.0, January 2015](#)).
4. Upon receiving three (3) consecutive sets of sample results at the lowest possible concentrations and one negative fecal

bacteria test per filtered water unit, BPS Communications and Facilities Management will immediately implement the Activation Communications Protocol (pg. 18).

5. Facilities Management and the head of school/principal will select a date for activating the water unit(s) to go online.
6. Once a date has been selected, the Facilities Management Plumbing Division will work on logistics for turning the water unit(s) online. Logistics will include an activation flush.

Flushing Protocol

1. *Food services equipment and fixtures* (i.e., food preparation sink faucets, kettles, tilt skillets, ice makers, etc.) shall be flushed every morning for two (2) minutes prior to the preparation of any food by the food service manager or designated food services employee. Only cold water shall be used for the flush and for the preparation of any food and or beverage. The food services manager will be responsible for keeping a daily log of all flushing activities.
2. *When drinking from an online fountain*, it is recommended that the drinker first let the water run for 5-10 seconds before drinking. This will be communicated to the BPS community through the Implementation Protocols: Education and Training (pg. 20).
3. *Following an extended school vacation* (e.g., summer vacation, February vacation), custodians will flush all online fountains prior to the restart of school.
4. *Before watering a school garden* with tap water, all gardeners must first flush the water for 2 minutes.

Filter and Filtered Water Fountain Standard Operating Procedure and Maintenance Protocol

In addition to the *Annual Testing Protocol* (pg. 8), BPS will collect samples for coliform testing of filtered online water units.

In cases where coliform is present within filtered online water units:

1. Upon notification from the BPS Sustainability and Environmental Resources Manager, BPS Facilities Management Plumbing Division will immediately deactivate *only the impacted online water unit(s)*, unless otherwise specifically directed. These units will be made offline and tagged "Water Shut Off. Do NOT turn on without Facilities Management or FNS (Food and Nutrition Services) Approval."
2. BPS Facilities Management will provide bottled water, bottled water units, and cups. One bottled water cooler will be provided for each deactivated water unit (e.g. water fountain) or as necessary to meet 248 CMR 10.00: Uniform State Plumbing Code requirements (See: Table 1: Minimum Facilities For Building Occupancy, available at the following link: [248 CMR 10.00: Uniform state plumbing code](#)).
3. BPS Communications and BPS Facilities Management will immediately implement the Deactivation Communications Protocol (pg. 18).
4. BPS Facilities Management Environmental and Plumbing Divisions will inspect the impacted water unit and schedule remediation action(s) (e.g., replacement of the filter).
5. The impacted water unit will remain deactivated until

remediation actions have been completed and BPS Facilities Management Environmental Division has received one (1) sample result absent of coliform per affected water unit.

BPS Facilities Management will initiate and uphold a vendor contract to replace and maintain water fountain filters once per year or more as needed.

Daily Use/Maintenance

- Only water should be put down the drains. Anything else can cause clogging and lead to permanent damage of the unit and plumbing.
- Custodians are responsible for wiping down the units daily. The units shall be cleaned using the procedures outlined for all high touch surfaces using food grade cleaning products.

Filter Status Indicator Light

- When the light turns yellow, the school should put in a work order via Asset Essentials, and select "Filter Replacement".
- The yellow light is just an indicator that the filter is approaching the end of its life and will need to be changed soon. The light does not indicate that the filter or water quality is compromised.
- If a light turns red, please place one of the signs provided in your Drinking Water Binder on the unit and encourage occupants to utilize another unit until the filter can be replaced.

Leaking/broken Unit

- If the unit has been newly installed within the last year, the school should reach out to Audrey Ng, the Water & Sustainability Project Manager to have the contractor address the issue under warranty.
- If the unit is not newly installed, the school should put in a work order via [Asset Essentials](#) to be addressed by your plumbing supervisor.
- The school's operations staff may choose to use the tools provided in the [Water Bottle Refill Station Repair Kit](#) to open and turn off the unit to stop the leaking until the contractor arrives.

Bottled Water Protocol

- BPS Facilities Management will provide bottled water, bottled water coolers, and cups for all offline schools, and for any medical or food service areas that lack access to tap water units in any online schools.
- BPS Facilities Management will cease bottled water accounts for schools that are activated online. Bottled water coolers will only remain in an online school in medical or food service areas if those areas lack access to tap water units.
- BPS Facilities Management will manage and track all bottled water accounts.
- Heads of school/principals will develop a school-based plan for ensuring bottled water and cups are available continuously, without disruption, on all water coolers throughout the entire school day, including during meal times. Schools are responsible for calling Facilities

Management to order water and cups, if running low before the existing, regular water delivery schedule.

IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOLS: COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTING

BPS Communications is responsible for updating and maintaining the BPS water website at [BPS Water / Boston School Water Quality](#) with content support from BPS Facilities Management and BPS Department of Health and Wellness. BPS Communications will update the BPS water website to include a current list of online schools and the most recent annual test results, and a current list of offline schools. These lists must be updated every time a school is activated or deactivated.

Deactivation Communications Protocol

In cases where coliform is present or concentrations of lead and or copper in water units used for drinking or food preparation exceed the lead/copper action levels, BPS Communications and Facilities Management will promptly implement the Deactivation Communications Protocol:

1. The school's principal/head of school will be notified of the deactivation protocol and test results by email with the test results and a standardized letter for the school community.
2. The letter will include the water testing results and a link to the BPS water website, which provides resources related to lead in the water. A letter template will be provided by BPS Communications and BPS Facilities Management, and the testing results will be provided by BPS Facilities Management.

3. Any media statements will be managed by BPS Communications.

Activation Communications Protocol

Upon receiving three (3) consecutive sets of sample results below lead and copper action levels, and one negative fecal bacteria test result for filtered water units, BPS Communications and Facilities Management will immediately implement the Activation Communications Protocol:

1. The school's principal/head of school will be notified of the activation protocol and test results.
2. The letter will include the water testing results, a link to the BPS water website, and details regarding any water infrastructure improvements (e.g., new fountains, filters, pipes). A letter template will be provided by BPS Communications and BPS Facilities Management, and the test results will be provided by BPS Facilities Management. The principal/head of school will share this information with the school community.
3. BPS Facilities Management and the principal/head of school will select a date for activating the water unit(s) online.
4. Once a date has been selected, BPS Facilities Management Plumbing Division will implement the logistics for turning the water unit(s) online.

ANNUAL REPORTING

BPS Facilities Management will provide water testing results and any recent water-related information to BPS Communications for the BPS water webpage and annual notices to the BPS

community.

BPS Department of Health and Wellness and BPS Facilities Management will provide annual updates to the “BPS Drinking Water Access Policy”, if needed.

BPS Department of Health and Wellness and BPS Facilities Management will annually report on the implementation of the Water Policy to the District Wellness Council and subsequently the BPS School Committee. Following BPS School Committee review, this information will be shared with MassDEP.

IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOLS: EDUCATION & TRAINING

The following BPS staff will receive annual training and professional development about this policy and its protocols:

- Principals/heads of school will receive training at the Annual Leadership Institute as a part of Operations and/or wellness-related sessions.
- Food service managers and staff will receive training at the summer training provided by Food and Nutrition Services.
- Custodians will receive training at summer training provided by BPS Facilities Management.
- School-based staff will be trained by principals/heads of school at the beginning of the school year, as part of the school policies and procedures overview.
- Any new Facilities Management Environmental and Plumbing Division staff will receive training as part of their onboarding process.

BPS Department of Health and Wellness will educate, promote,

and communicate the importance and benefits of drinking water, and collaborate with Facilities Management and Food and Nutrition Services to communicate all aspects of this policy to school leaders, staff, students, and school community.

BPS School Wellness Councils will include water-policy related goals as part of their annual Wellness Action Plans.

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