

WIIN Project: Testing for Lead in Drinking Water at Schools and Child Care Facilities

January 2021



ABOUT THE PROJECT

This project to test the drinking water for lead at Hawaii schools and child care facilities is part of a nationwide program that was established by the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act of 2016. As part of the WIIN Act, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) granted states the money to test drinking water for lead at schools and child care facilities (CCFs). The project is a collaboration between the Hawaii State Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services.

WHY WAS MY CHILD CARE FACILITY CHOSEN FOR TESTING?

Facilities were chosen for testing if they might be at “higher risk” based on the age of the buildings. In addition, DOH tested the drinking water for lead at all licensed CCFs in 2008. If a CCF was tested in that prior study, it will not be included in this current project.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

CCFs involved in the project will have pre-planned visits from members of the project team to identify the drinking water taps that require sampling. This may include the kitchen sink and any other taps used for drinking water. A date for sampling will then be arranged between May and December 2021. The day before sampling, project team members will visit the home and flush the taps, leaving them unused overnight. Early the next morning, samples will be taken from each of those drinking water taps and sent to the Hawaii State Lab for analysis. Because taps will need to remain unused overnight, you should make sure to have adequate water supplies overnight. This may include buying bottled water or filling of empty containers before the taps are flushed.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Hawaii WIIN Project Website

<http://health.hawaii.gov/WIIN>



Hawaii Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (HI-CLPPP) Website

<http://lead.hawaii.gov>



EPA WIIN Grant Website

<http://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/wiin-grant-lead-testing-school-and-child-care-program-drinking-water>



Call the Department of Health Hazard Evaluation and Emergency Response (HEER) Office

808-586-4249

Site visits and sampling by the project team are not expected to interfere with any regular facility activities and all COVID-19 safety procedures will be followed.

HOW CAN I GET THE RESULTS?

Results will be available as soon as possible on the WIIN project website:

<http://health.hawaii.gov/wiin>. Results will also be sent to each CCF for posting. Please be aware that due to capacity limitations at the lab, results may not be available for up to a few months after samples are taken. If any of the samples result in lead levels above the action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), the affected tap will be blocked off within 24 hours or the next business day and will no longer be available for use. Alternative water sources will be needed. Follow-up testing will be done and plans will need to be made to fix the problem causing the lead contamination.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?

Lead is a heavy metal that is naturally present in the environment and has been used for infrastructure, including pipes. When lead gets into human bodies, it can harm the brain and nervous system. Long-term effects of childhood lead exposure include problems with learning, school performance, attention, and behavior as well as anemia and other health problems.

Children can be exposed to lead in many ways. Most exposures happen at home and are the result of deteriorated lead-based paint or contaminated soil. The lead transferred onto a child's hands or toys may be accidentally ingested when the hands or toys are put into their mouths. Eating paint chips or chewing on painted surfaces can also introduce lead into a child's body. Other lead exposures happen from the mouthing of metal objects, the making of fishing weights, and exposure to certain types of imported spices and ritual products. Visit <http://Lead.Hawaii.gov> for more information on lead sources and how to protect children from lead exposure.

Drinking water contaminated with lead is another way that children can be exposed. While this has been a significant problem in some communities on the mainland, Hawai'i has not had the same types of problems with lead contaminated drinking water. Public water systems in Hawai'i do not historically have lead contamination. However, it is possible for lead to contaminate drinking water through fixtures and piping, particularly in older buildings. This project will investigate the drinking water taps at risk for lead and identify any problem areas to prevent children from being exposed to lead.