



"Intelligence without ambition is a bird without wings." C. A. Danielson

From the Office of  
**Denise L. Clemons**  
*Superintendent*

October 20, 2016

To the Students, Families, and Staff of Gardner Public Schools:

During recent sampling for lead and copper, some water traps at our schools had copper levels that exceed the Massachusetts and federal Action Level for copper in drinking water at schools and early education and child care facilities. See sample results below. The Action Level for copper in drinking water is 1.3 milligrams per liter (also known as parts per million).

We would like to inform you about our plans to reduce potential exposure to copper in drinking water at our schools. Copper is not believed to be in our water source but plumbing and fixtures in our buildings may contain copper, resulting in an increase in copper content in tap water.

Sampling Results			
School	Date Sample Collected	Location	Copper Results in mg/L
Gardner High School	9/17/2016	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Hallway Bubbler, C Stairway	17 mg/L
Gardner High School	9/17/2016	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Hallway Bubbler, C Stairway	240 mg/L
Helen Mae Sauter School	9/20/2016	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Hallway Bubbler	1.5 mg/L

Copper is a necessary micronutrient and is needed in small “trace” amounts for good health, but too much copper in diet or drinking water may cause adverse health effects. Some people who consume drinking water with copper in excess of the EPA Action Level may experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. However, most people are unlikely to experience health problems from exposure to modestly elevated copper levels in drinking water because the human body has a natural mechanism for maintaining the proper level of copper in it. People with Wilson’s disease, children less than one year old, and individuals with liver disease cannot eliminate excess copper from their bodies as well and are more likely to experience negative health effects on the liver and kidney from short-term exposure to copper levels that exceed the EPA’s Action Level. See the MassDEP Fact Sheet on copper and your health at: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/drinking/alpha/a-thru-h/copperfs.pdf>

The administration takes these results very seriously and is moving immediately to safeguard the health of the students, faculty and staff. The following information describes the steps we are taking to address the issues of copper in the water.

To safeguard our students and other sensitive individuals (including women who are pregnant or nursing), our schools are working closely and cooperatively with MassDEP and others and taking action as follows:

1. We have removed from service all taps with copper levels over the Action Level.
2. We have posted public information that includes outreach material to all students, parents, teachers, staff and local officials on the District website.

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3. We will develop a sampling plan to conduct testing at outlets (faucets, water bubblers, etc.) where students and staff get water for drinking, beverage preparation and cooking.
4. We are implementing a flushing and water usage plan to safeguard against copper exposure from drinking water in the schools at outlets that are found to be above the Action Level for copper. This includes the daily flushing of water bubblers and/or faucets at sinks and the limitation of water consumption to cold-water faucets for food and beverage preparation.
5. We will undertake efforts to determine the cause of this copper Action Level exceedance and evaluate the adequacy of our existing corrosion control system. We will develop and put into place a corrective action plan as quickly as possible following additional testing and consultation.
6. Through periodic reports, we will keep you informed as to the progress of our efforts. These reports will serve to let you know what has been done and what is being done to safeguard against copper exposure from drinking water at our schools.

**A Reminder:** The water systems at the schools are not unlike water systems found in other buildings. Older plumbing systems and fixtures, especially, can contain lead pipes or solder that can allow lead to enter tap water. Plumbing systems also contain copper. If you have questions about lead or copper in your home's water supply, and are using a private well, you can have your water tested. If you are receiving water from a public water system (i.e., if you pay a water bill) you can call your local water department for information or check the Consumer Confidence Report sent out by the public water supplier annually.

If you have any questions on this information, please contact Robert O'Brien, Director of Facilities, at 978-632-1603, ext. 2045.

Sincerely,

Denise L. Clemons, M. Ed  
Superintendent of Gardner Public Schools

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