

# SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 73 (KAMLOOPS/THOMPSON)

## PRESS RELEASE

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June 14, 2017

### **SD 73 working hard to keep school water safe for students, staff, public**

All schools in School District No. 73 (Kamloops/Thompson) will immediately begin to flush hallway fountains and classroom taps to ensure that drinking water does not contain elevated levels of lead.

The decision to flush all cold-water sources of drinking water in SD 73 schools follows the discovery that some local schools had slightly elevated levels of lead in their drinking water at the beginning of the day when the faucet or tap was first turned on. The district has recently finished testing the water in all schools.

In instances when a water fountain or tap tested higher than acceptable for lead, further evaluation showed that simply running outlets for 30 seconds to one minute flushed lead from the system. As a result, district managers decided to create a flushing protocol for all schools.

“We are doing this out of an abundance of caution,” said Michelle Marginet, SD 73’s Manager of Health and Safety. “This is an important health and safety initiative for students and staff alike. We want to do all we can to ensure that water in our schools is safe for people to drink.”

The issue of lead in school drinking water emerged as a provincial issue after elevated levels of lead were found in some Lower Mainland schools. The Ministry of Education directed all B.C. districts to test their water systems.

The problem occurs when water sits in pipes overnight or through a weekend and comes into prolonged contact with lead pipe solder commonly used in home, business and institutional plumbing systems in buildings constructed before 1990.

Marginet said testing in SD 73 showed that in some schools, lead levels are elevated in the morning when the tap or faucet is turned on for the first time of the day. Once the water is running, however, lead levels in those outlets quickly drops below regulatory health standards and tests safe for the remainder of the day.

As a result, district management decided it was best to create a district-wide flushing protocol in all schools built before 1990, even in schools where no problems were measured. The district worked with Interior Health to develop the protocol, as well as to create information for parents and the public.

“We really are trying to be proactive,” Marginet said. “We are being overly cautious because we want to ensure no one is exposed to lead, and this is the only way we can guarantee it.”

The district has instructed staff about the new requirements. Custodians, teachers and principals will ensure school drinking water outlets are flushed for one minute at the start of every school day. A letter will be sent to parents explaining the issue and the proposed solutions.

Long-term solutions — including the possibility of replacing piping in schools — are being explored. Annual testing will continue in district schools to ensure the flushing protocol is working.

For more information, contact:

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Attachment: [Joint IHA-SD 73 Bulletin to Schools/Parents Regarding School Drinking Water](#)