



4504 DRINKING WATER TESTING POLICY

Policy Type: Administrative
Applies To: All Staff, Students, Visitors
Approved By: LCS Head of Schools
Policy Reviewed: every 2 years
Adopted: 11 2017
Revisions: 08 2021
10 2023

1. Policy statement

- (a) Independent school authorities are expected to test for lead content in drinking water in their school facilities to ensure it meets provincial requirements established by the Ministry of Health, such as the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality for lead.
- (b) Authorities should take reasonable and prompt steps to resolve elevated lead levels that are outside established guidelines on any drinking water quality test results.
- (c) While this policy specifically addresses lead content in drinking water, the Ministry of Education expects independent school authorities will work with appropriate health authorities to address other issues that affect the quality of water as prescribed under applicable provincial and federal legislation.
- (d) Band operated schools operating on First Nations reserves should work with the BC First Nations Health Authority.

2. Rationale or purpose of policy

- (a) Student health and safety is a concern shared by all parties in the K-12 education system. This policy provides minimum requirements for testing lead content in drinking water of school facilities, reporting of the results, and mitigation strategies to eliminate or reduce any risks to students and staff.
- (b) Authority
 - Drinking Water Protection Act
 - Drinking Water Protection Regulation
 - Public Health Act
 - Independent School Act

3. Policy in full

- (a) All water suppliers in the province are required to test their water regularly. This includes small private systems (such as restaurants), cooperatively owned systems (such as strata properties), and larger municipal systems owned by local governments. Independent school authorities operating private water systems must contact their local health authority to ensure they are meeting all testing requirements.
- (b) Independent school authorities are responsible for ensuring the overall safety of their facilities, including, the quality of drinking water within their systems and plumbing. Independent school facilities must comply with the enactments of British Columbia, including those relating to health, safety, and water quality.

4. Procedures related to policy

- (a) Authorities are expected to consult with the appropriate Health Authority to develop a water quality lead testing program for drinking water in their school facilities that would outline the following;
 - Risk assessment
 - Water testing
 - Communication plan
 - Mitigation strategies

5. Water Testing Requirement

- (a) Initially, all outlets that provide drinking water in school facilities should be tested for lead content by December 15, 2017. The Ministry of Education will be monitoring compliance with this requirement. It is the Ministry of Education's expectation that authorities will complete lead content testing on all school facilities once every 3 years. As a best practice, annual testing is recommended.
- (b) Authorities are to work with the appropriate Health Authority to determine a testing program for their school facilities. The testing procedure and amount of samples taken at each facility shall be determined in consultation with the Health Authority. All test results must be shared with the Health Authority.

6. Mitigation Strategies

- (a) If sample results reveal lead levels exceed concentration of 0.005 mg/L (based on maximum allowable concentration--Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality by Health Canada), the independent school authority, in consultation with the appropriate Health Authority, should undertake mitigation strategies which may include:
 - Flushing regimes
 - Deactivation of water sources and supplemental signage
 - Installation of filtration systems
 - Plumbing upgrades
 - Or other steps that result in reducing the exposure to lead to acceptable levels

7. Communication and Reporting Requirements

- (a) In the event that testing finds drinking water concentrations of lead at or above the maximum acceptable level, the Independent School Authority must:
- 7.a.1. immediately inform the Independent Schools Branch of the issue. Ongoing compliance with this policy will be confirmed during monitoring visits and external evaluations.
 - 7.a.2. work collaboratively with the appropriate Health Authority to communicate the results of testing lead content in drinking water to parents, students and staff by describing the following;
 - rationale for testing lead in drinking water,
 - identify partnership with the Health Authority to work toward a solution,
 - state results of sampling,
 - identify mitigation strategies implemented or being consider by the authority, and
 - provide contact information for the authority and the Regional Health Authority for parents, students and staff to request further information.
8. Ongoing compliance with this policy will be confirmed during monitoring visits and external evaluations.

Reviewed 09 2025