

# SAFE DRINKING WATER – CHECKING FOR LEAD



*The United States Navy is committed to protecting the health of Joint Base Sailors and Airmen, civilian staff, and their families by providing safe drinking water. Drinking water quality, including testing for lead, is monitored throughout the installation. It is Navy policy to follow Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) optional guidelines for testing and sampling of water outlets from which children may drink at childcare centers.*

## WHAT IS NAVY REGION HAWAII DOING?

- Navy Region Hawaii will test water from sinks, faucets, fountains, and hose bibs at DOD or Navy-owned or managed primary schools, Child Development Centers (CDCs), Navy operated 24/7 Group Homes, and Youth and Teen Centers at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Oahu and Pacific Missile Range Facility, Kauai.
- Test results will be made available at locations where testing was conducted.
- This is an ongoing program that will include yearly updates and complete retesting every five years.

## WHAT IS LEAD?

- Lead is a naturally occurring metal that is harmful if inhaled or swallowed.
- Lead can be found in air, soil, dust, food, and water, and is common in plumbing materials and water service lines.
- Exposure to elevated levels of lead can result in adverse health effects.

## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS OF LEAD EXPOSURE?

- Lead poses a significant health risk to young children up to the age of six, especially infants and fetuses, where the danger is very severe.
- Growing children absorb lead more rapidly and are negatively impacted by a level of lead exposure that would have little effect on an adult.
- A child's mental and physical development can be irreversibly impaired by over-exposure to lead.
- EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20% or more of a person's total lead exposure.
- Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40% to 60% of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

## HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO A FACILITY'S DRINKING WATER?

- Even though drinking water from the Navy's water systems on Oahu and Kauai meets federal and state standards, a facility may still encounter elevated lead levels at the outlet or spigot due to lead in plumbing materials.
- The most common cause is corrosion of materials containing lead in the facility's water distribution system, such as plumbing pipes, solder, water coolers, and faucets.
- Many factors contribute to corrosion, including the acidity of the water, and when water stands in the plumbing system for prolonged periods of time.

## HOW MUCH LEAD IN DRINKING WATER IS TOO MUCH?

- EPA set a guidance level of 20 ppb in childcare settings to protect children who are exposed to lead in drinking water on a chronic basis.
- EPA recommends that childcare facilities collect first-draw samples from water fountains and outlets, which maximizes the likelihood that the highest concentrations of lead are found because water remained in plumbing overnight.
- When sampling results show lead levels exceeding 20 ppb, those fountains and outlets are taken out of service until remediation is complete.

## WHAT IS REMEDIATION?

- Remediation refers to both short- and long-term actions taken to reduce the levels of lead in drinking water if test results indicate that there is a lead issue at a childcare facility.
- EPA's childcare facility sampling protocol was designed to identify specific fountains and faucets that require remediation, such as water cooler replacement.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- Contact your family doctor or pediatrician who can perform blood tests for lead.
- The latest Navy Water Quality Reports for Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Oahu and Pacific Missile Range Facility, Kauai are available at <http://go.usa.gov/yUyY> and can provide you with information about your facility's water supply.
- More information on the health effects of lead can be found on EPA's website at <http://www2.epa.gov/lead>.