



Lead in Water

A Fact Sheet for the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon

Q. What is lead?

- A. Lead is a soft metal that has a very low melting point and is very useful as a solder for copper pipe used for water systems. Lead is also very durable and corrosion resistant, which makes it useful in various piping applications. Lead forms alloys with other metals that are easily cast into plumbing fixtures such as brass faucets and drinking fountains.

Q. Why should I be concerned with lead in these various plumbing applications?

- A. When drinking water sits in contact with plumbing components containing lead, such as solder and brass fixtures, small amounts of the lead leach into the drinking water. The amount of lead that leaches into the water is a function of the corrosiveness of the water and the time it sits in contact with the plumbing component. Lead can cause adverse health effects.

Q. Is there a safe level of lead in drinking water?

- A. The EPA has established an action limit associated with lead in drinking water of 15 parts per billion.

Q. Should I test for lead in water?

- A. There is no statutory requirement to test Archdiocesan facilities for lead in water. If your drinking water comes from a municipal water supply, it is already tested for lead. If your water comes from a water well, you should test your water for lead at least once.

Q. What if I want to test for lead in water?

- A. Any lead in water testing at Archdiocesan parish/school facilities should be coordinated with the Archdiocesan Property Office. The Archdiocese plans to conduct lead in water testing at all schools. Pastors, principals, and business managers will be contacted soon with details of the testing process.

Q. What should be done if the lead in water content is higher than safe levels?

- A. In most situations, the lead content in water can be controlled and minimized by periodically flushing the water system. If this is not practical, or effective, it may be necessary to replace lead-containing plumbing fixtures or piping applications. Using potable water may also be a means of controlling or eliminating exposure to lead in water.

Q. Whom should I contact if I have further questions about lead in water?

- A. **Contact:**

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