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ADEM and State Department of Education Renew Efforts to Test Drinking Water in Public Schools

Montgomery - In an effort to ensure the safety of drinking water in public schools, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management will be collaborating with the Alabama State Department of Education to resume sampling of drinking water in the public schools. This partnership will be supported by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and will be in addition to an ongoing sampling program for childcare centers. This project will also mark a return to sampling drinking water at public schools, after a successful three-year effort from 2017-2019.

Childhood exposure to lead has long been a concern of researchers and medical professionals. While public water systems are required to conduct rigorous testing to ensure the water they produce meets all health-based standards and is non-corrosive, there are no state or federal requirements for child care centers or schools to test for lead in drinking water.

“This project’s continued goal of providing information to the parents and staff and protecting our children from dangerous exposure to lead will be served well by ADEM’s partnership with the State Department of Education,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur.

“Our earlier work with ALSDE was very fruitful, with over 1,000 schools across the state participating. We look forward to working with schools again to further our mission to ensure clean drinking water for Alabama’s most vulnerable populations,” said LeFleur.

State Superintendent Dr. Eric Mackey said, “Alabama’s schools have faced many challenges of late, particularly with the COVID-19 pandemic. Renewing our lead testing program with ADEM will provide everyone with current information on the quality of water provided in our schools, so that we can all focus on providing a safe learning environment.”

The program is based on EPA’s popular “3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water” guidance used by schools and childcare centers across the country. This program emphasizes training, testing, and taking action to reduce lead exposure in drinking water. Participating schools will be provided training and resources needed to self-evaluate and select fixtures for testing. The samples will be delivered to the State Drinking Water Laboratory for analysis at no cost to the schools. The program calls for schools to share the results with students, parents, and staff, and periodic reports will also be available on ADEM’s web page.

For more information on this program, contact ADEM at (334) 271-7700.

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