

LEAD TESTING IN SCHOOLS UPDATE AS OF JANUARY 2019

There is no federal or state regulatory requirement for testing lead levels in the drinking water at schools. However, because school aged children are especially vulnerable to the adverse health effects of elevated lead levels, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) joined together in March of 2016 to develop a voluntary school testing program. Following initial discussions in March, ADEM and ALSDE worked together to form a plan. In December of 2016, the Master Plan and the detailed Sampling Plan for the program were finalized and posted on the ADEM website.

The goal of this program is to test the approximately 1,500 public schools, which consist of approximately 8,000 buildings. Testing began in April of 2017 and is expected to be concluded no later than September of 2019. The Sampling Plan is based on EPA's "3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools" technical guidance document. The 3Ts (Training, Testing, and Telling) assist local school systems to select the appropriate buildings and sampling locations for testing. Site selection is based on plumbing fixture type, age, and accessibility to students and staff, with at least one water cooler and one kitchen sink tested at each school.

All samples are collected by the school system, a certified laboratory, the public water system that serves the school, or an entity approved by ADEM. If the samples are collected by school system staff, the staff member must receive appropriate training from either ADEM, the Alabama Rural Water Association (ARWA), or the Rural Communities Assistance Program (RCAP) prior to taking samples. The plan states that samples should be collected during the hotter months (August, September, April and May), as that is the time of year that lead levels would be expected to be highest.

The samples are analyzed by a state-certified laboratory chosen by the ALSDE or the local school system. When the results are received by ADEM, they are posted in the Department's eFile system. (See <http://app.adem.alabama.gov/eFile/> and select Media Area "Water", check "Custom Query", and select document category/type "SCHLAC")

To date, the Department has received 3,526 sampling results from 768 schools. Of those 3,526 samples, only 15 initially tested above EPA's Action Level of 0.020 mg/L. All 15 fixtures have since been taken out of service or have retested below the action level.

Below is a list of organizations and locations that provided training:

- March 2017, ARWA Annual Conference in Mobile
- April 2017, ADEM Main Office in Montgomery
- April 2017, ASDE Annual Conference in Orange Beach
- June 2017, ARWA Training Session in Huntsville
- June 2017, ARWA Training Session in Pell City
- July 2017, ARWA Training Session in Enterprise
- July 2017, ARWA Training Session in Monroeville
- September 2017, RCAP Training Session in Cullman
- September 2017, AWPCA Annual Conference in Perdido Beach
- November 2017, ARWA Board Training Meeting in Satsuma
- March 2018, ARWA Annual Conference in Mobile
- May 2018, ARWA/FRWA Annual Joint Training Conference in Panama City, Florida