

THE AMHERST, PELHAM & AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Serving the Towns of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett and Shutesbury

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
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October 11, 2016

Dear ARPS Community:

As shared in last Friday's Superintendent's update, our facilities department has been working to repair the water outlets that tested for unacceptable levels of lead at the beginning of the year. The outlets are being retested as repairs are completed. Fort River, Wildwood and the Middle School were built within four years of one another (from 1969-1973) so it is likely that the same intervention work will be required at all three since their systems are similar. We wanted to identify the best repair method to use before working across all three schools, so our maintenance staff began work first at Fort River. The retesting results came back from Fort River, so I would like to share what work was completed and the results of the testing.

Sixteen water outlets were repaired at Fort River by replacing the fixtures and the supply lines with certified, lead free parts. Given the ages of the building, we know that the original fixtures and supply lines were not certified lead free. It was hoped that this intervention would bring the lead levels in the affected water outlets below the action level of 15 parts per billion. While almost all of the repaired water outlets had a reduction in the lead levels, none dropped below that action level on first draw testing. The good news is that the flush tests on each water outlet were all below the action level, so the water is safe to drink after using the flushing protocols that we have had in place all year long. Also, the one water outlet that was above the action level on the flush test prior to the repairs (one of the water fountains near the gym) is now below the action level on the flush test, and therefore can be turned on. As with before we received this latest information, there are no concerns about the safety of the water source itself given the results of the flush test. [The detailed results of the retesting \(along with the initial testing\) can be found here.](#)

Our next step is to proceed with an additional repair on these outlets, which is replacing the shut-off valve with a certified, lead free replacement part. The challenge of this repair process is that water must be shut off in the school in order to do the work based on the antiquated systems in the building. Given the disruption this would cause to students and staff, the repairs will be completed on the weekends. We will retest these water outlets after the additional repairs are completed. If the results come back below the action level, we will complete all repairs at Fort River, Wildwood, and the Middle Schools using this methodology. Since this work will need to be completed when staff and students are not present, the timeline for completion will be longer

than we originally hoped. We will continue to inform you of the timeline and results as we receive them.

We continue to work with our DPW to advise us on these matters. Their support and expertise continues to guide our response to the issues described above. If these additional repairs do not drop the lead below the action level, our options become significantly more complex since repairs would involve drilling and removing parts of walls, which creates additional environmental hazards and would be very costly. Hopefully, the next step of repairs is successful and we do not need to consider this complex option.

For the time being, we will continue our flushing protocol, which two tests have confirmed provides safe drinking water for all students and staff at Fort River.

Thank you for your patience as our maintenance staff continues to work to resolve this issue. When we receive retesting data from the repaired water outlets at Crocker Farm and Pelham, we will share information with the community.

Please let me know if you have concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Morris
Acting Superintendent