



DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY • COUNTY OF HAWAII

345 KEKŪANAŌ'A STREET, SUITE 20 • HILO, HAWAII 96720

TELEPHONE (808) 961-8050 • FAX (808) 961-8657

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FAQS REGARDING DRINKING WATER AND LEAD CONTAMINATION:

➤ **Could the incidents that occurred in Flint, Michigan happen here on Hawaii Island?**

This kind of incident is unlikely here on Hawaii Island because of very stringent Lead and Copper compliance monitoring requirements that the Hawaii State Department of Health, Safe Drinking Water Branch (SDWB) enforces. SDWB requires all public drinking water utilities who are under their jurisdiction to comply with the Federal Lead and Copper Rule (LCR). The LCR is a key component of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The SDWA is the principal law governing drinking water safety in the United States.

The Department of Water Supply, County of Hawaii (HDWS) is compliant with the requirements of the LCR in all of its 23 public water systems. In addition, HDWS and SDWB have no records or knowledge of lead service laterals installed in HDWS's water systems, which was a primary source of the lead contamination in Flint, Michigan.

For more information on HDWS lead and water quality results please access the Water Quality Reports at <http://www.hawaiidws.org/7%20the%20water/ccrpage.htm>. You may also contact our Water Quality Assurance and Control Branch at (808) 961-8670.

These Water Quality Reports are published annually by HDWS and contain information about your drinking water along with data on contaminants that were found in your water during the past monitoring year.

➤ **Why is lead a problem?**

Lead is a common metal that has been used in numerous consumer products (e.g., lead-based paint, some forms of pottery and crystal stemware). However, it is now known to be a toxic metal harmful to human health if ingested or inhaled. Important sources of lead exposure include: ambient air, soil and dust (both inside and outside the home), food (which can be contaminated by lead in the air or in food containers), and water (from corrosion of plumbing).

➤ **Does lead affect everyone equally?**

Young children, infants, and fetuses appear to be particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning. A dose of lead that would have little effect on an adult can have a big effect on a small body. Also, growing children will more rapidly adsorb any lead they consume. A child's mental and physical development can be irreversibly stunted by over-exposure to lead. Also, adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low lead levels more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones and can be released later in life. For example, during pregnancy, the child can receive lead from the mother's bones which could then affect brain development.

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➤ **How does lead get into our drinking water?**

Typically, lead gets into your drinking water AFTER the water leaves the well or water treatment plant. The most common source of lead is your home's plumbing (water pipes, fittings and solder). Older homes may have fittings and solder that have higher lead content than current standards. The most common way lead leaches out of the home's plumbing is through corrosion. Dissolved oxygen, low pH (acidity) and low mineral content in water are common causes of corrosion.

For more general information on Lead there are two toll-free telephone services:

- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- National Lead Information Center: 1-800-532-3394 (1-800-LEAD-FYI)

➤ **How can I tell if my drinking water at the tap contains too much lead?**

Because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead dissolved in water the only way to know with certainty if you have lead at your tap is to have your water tested by a certified drinking water laboratory. The HDWS is not certified to analyze for lead in drinking water. If you are concerned that your family is at risk, you may contact a State of Hawaii certified drinking water laboratory three of which are listed below:

Test America Honolulu
4429 Malaai Street, #104
Honolulu, HI 96818
Phone: (808) 486-5227

Food Quality Analysts, LLC
3375 Koapaka Street, #G314
Honolulu, HI 96819
Phone: (808) 839-9444

AECOS
45-939 Kamehameha Hwy.,
#104
Kaneohe, HI 96744
Phone: (808) 234-7770

Contact these laboratories for information on the cost of testing and instructions on how to collect, store, and ship your water sample for testing.

➤ **As consumers what actions can we take to reduce lead in our drinking water?**

Here are a few steps you can take to address potential risks from lead in your tap water:

- Flush your pipes before drinking.
Anytime the water in a particular faucet in your home has not been used for six hours or longer (such as overnight or during the work day), "flush" your cold water pipes by running the water until you can feel that the water has become as cold as it will get. You must do this for every drinking water faucet – taking a shower will not flush your kitchen tap. Flushing could take as little as five to thirty seconds if there has been recent heavy water use such as showering or toilet flushing. Otherwise, it could take two minutes or longer.

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Once you have flushed a tap, you might fill one or more containers with water and put them in the refrigerator for later use that day. The water that was flushed – usually one to two gallons – can be used for non-consumption purposes such as washing dishes or clothes, watering plants, etc. This is good conservation practice.

- Only use COLD water for consumption.
Use only cold water from the cold-water tap for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead because it dissolves lead more quickly than cold water. If hot water is needed then cold water should be drawn from the tap and then heated.

The two actions recommended above are very important to the health of your family. They will probably be effective in reducing lead levels because most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not from the local water supply.

You can find more guidance on www.DrinkTap.org.

- **Are there water treatment devices that can be used to remove lead from my drinking water?**

There are many devices which are certified for effective lead reduction, but devices that are not designed to remove lead will not work. USEPA suggests that you follow the recommendations below before purchasing any device.

- Verify the claim of manufacturers by contacting NSF International or the Water Quality Association.
- If you purchase a water filter to remove lead ensure that it meets the National Sanitation Foundation Standard 53, specifically for the removal of lead. You can verify the National Sanitation Foundation certification at <http://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/>. Also, always follow the manufacturer's instructions for the maintenance of the unit, including specifics regarding replacing the filters.

References:

EPA Lead and Copper Rule Guidance Manual, EPA 811-B-92-002. September 1992.

EPA Lead and Copper Rule Minor Revisions, Subpart E, Special Regulations, Including Monitoring Regulations and Prohibition on Lead Use, January 2000.

EPA Actions You Can Take To Reduce Lead In Drinking Water, EPA 810-F-93-001, June 1993.

AWWA Field Guide to SDWA Regulations, American Water Works Association, Denver, CO, 2006.

AWWA Public Affairs Advisory, Messaging on lead in water, American Water Works Association, Denver, CO, January 29, 2016.

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