

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850 □ (301) 279-3381

May 6, 2004

Update #3 on Drinking Water Safety Effort

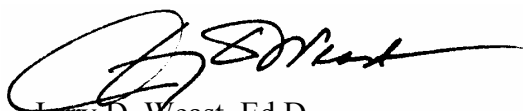
Dear Parents, Students, and Staff:

Efforts are continuing to identify and resolve problems associated with ensuring the safety of school drinking water. Over the past two months, literally thousands of samples of water from sink faucets, water bubblers, electric water coolers, and outdoor taps have been taken from more than 40 schools. Another 20 schools are currently being tested. The effort has identified a range of findings, from no elevated levels of lead at all to levels many times beyond minimal standards in certain isolated water sources. A technical review is under way to determine the source of the elevated lead findings and recommend the best way to correct the problems. School system and health department personnel are working closely with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission to ensure the accuracy and rigor of the assessment process. An interagency task force coordinated by the Office of the County Executive is helping to oversee the effort.

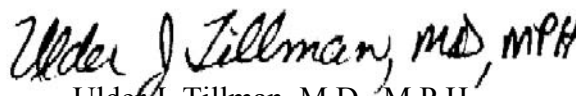
In the meantime, the flushing of drinking water sources is continuing. A review of the procedures implemented since March has revealed the opportunity to modify the flushing protocol. The new protocols are consistent with recommendations from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It also will save time and effort by school system personnel and conserve water. All electric water coolers will continue to be flushed for 15 minutes every four hours. The extended water flushing is necessary to clear the large holding tanks in electric water coolers. Other designated water sources, such as water bubblers and kitchen faucets, are connected directly to water pipes and lack holding tanks. A review of EPA guidance suggests that such fixtures can be thoroughly washed out with a 60-second cold water flush. Consequently, we have retained the extended 15-minute flush for the electric coolers and implemented a 60-second cold water flush for the other designated drinking water sources. School staff will continue to begin the flushing protocol before schools open and repeat the process every four hours while schools are open for public use.

Regular updates about the release of test results for individual schools will continue to be communicated to parents, students, and staff of the affected schools. In addition, updates are posted on the school system's web site at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/emergency/lead/>. We will continue to keep you informed about the efforts to ensure the safety of school drinking water.

Respectfully,



Jerry D. Weast, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools



Ulde J. Tillman, M.D., M.P.H.
County Health Officer