

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

March 23, 2004

Update #2

Dear Parents, Students, and Staff:

This letter is an update on continued efforts to ensure that drinking water is safe in our schools. Since last week, steps have been taken to accelerate the testing of a sample of 20 schools to identify what, if any, patterns may be present in the elevated levels of lead already found in some school water samples. It is important to note that test results showed that almost all of the water sources in the first three schools were well within the normal standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, until further testing is completed, we will continue the precautionary measures instituted in every school.

The process of flushing all designated sources of drinking water for 15 minutes every four hours provides a recognized safeguard against the potential accumulation of lead residue in water pipes and fixtures. This is consistent with the guidelines provided by the EPA. As a result, it is not necessary for students to bring bottled water to school.

Students, however, are not immune from worries about the safety of drinking water. We know that the very visible steps we have taken, including warning signs, combined with the heightened media attention on the health risks of lead contamination, may frighten some young children and create anxiety in others. Some parents may be worried, too. At this time, we ask that parents and families recognize that the drinking water safeguards we have implemented are based on the best medical and environmental science available to address this potential hazard.

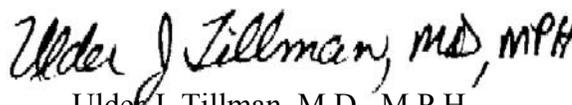
Most importantly, though, the efforts reflect the hard work of many people who are very concerned about the wellbeing of students. They include building services staff, nurses, teachers, plant operations staff, secretaries, principals, and many others who are working very hard every day to ensure the safety and welfare of children. They are helping young people understand what is happening in our schools, and we ask that parents encourage their children to ask questions if they have continued worries about drinking water. In addition, the school system has established a new web site at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/emergency/water/> devoted specifically to providing up-to-date information on this issue.

As always, we will continue to provide parents, students, and staff with periodic updates about the efforts to ensure the safety of drinking water in our schools. Thank you.

Respectfully,



Jerry D. Weast, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools



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