



Okaloosa County News Release

Elevated Levels of Lead Found in Some Okaloosa Homes, County Suspects Older Plumbing as Cause

In a recent round of lead testing that took place across the southern portion of Okaloosa County, a small number of homes were found to have a detectable level of lead that surpassed acceptable federal standards. Of thirty samples that were taken across unincorporated Ft. Walton Beach, unincorporated Mary Esther, Shalimar, and Okaloosa Island, twenty-six returned non-detectable results, or results that fell below the 15 parts per billion guideline. Four met the federal action level.

Okaloosa County's water supply comes from deep public water supply wells. Samples taken from the Okaloosa County Water and Sewer source water have consistently come back as non-detectable or below federal levels, and no county distribution mains contain lead.

Lead in water that was tested could come from the interior plumbing or plumbing fixtures of homes, especially if those fixtures are from older construction. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have plumbing which contains trace amounts of lead. If water is in contact with those structures for a significant length of time, the potential of detectable levels of lead in the water will rise.

Okaloosa County is taking numerous steps related to lead. OCWS is increasing monitoring efforts and public education regarding lead in drinking water. OCWS is also conducting a corrosion control study, to determine if there are any actions that can be taken to help lessen the possibility of lead in the customer's interior plumbing.

The county also suggests that if residents are concerned about the possibility of lead in their water, they follow a number of steps to minimize the chance of exposure. These steps include running water for 15-30 seconds before drinking or cooking to flush lead absorbed by

standing water out of the system. If cooking or making baby formula, use cold water, as lead dissolves more easily in warm water. And if you have plumbing fixtures that might contain lead, specifically those made of brass, consider replacing them.

Okaloosa County is committed to maintaining the highest possible quality of water supply, and to the health and well-being of Okaloosa County residents, and will be taking every precaution possible to ensure that the water supply is healthy for residents. For more information, please see the attached public education document titled "Important Information About Lead in Your Drinking Water". This document specifically applies to Okaloosa County Water & Sewer customers in unincorporated Fort Walton Beach, unincorporated Mary Esther, Shalimar, and Okaloosa Island.

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Robert L. Brown III
Public Information Officer
850.651.7270; fax 651.7551
rbrown@co.okaloosa.fl.us
www.okaloosafil.us
1250 N. Eglin Parkway
Shalimar, Fl., 32579

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