## What school administrators need to know about

# LEAD

## in drinking water

Studies and media reports over the past school year indicate lead exposure is an ongoing concern across the country, not just in Flint, Michigan where a major crisis last year brought nationwide attention to the lead issues in public water supplies.

Individuals with the greatest risk, even with short term exposure, are young children and pregnant women. Children will absorb 30-75 percent of the lead they ingest while adults will absorb only 11 percent. Lead exposure can result in reduced cognitive development and neurobehavioral deficits.

### Older school buildings are at greater risk

Older schools present the biggest challenge. Lead pipe and lead solder were used in many of the local plumbing codes up until 1986. Water can meet acceptable standards when it leaves a municipal water treatment facility, but can become exposed to lead as it passes through an aging infrastructure.

### Begin with testing

Selection of a drinking water treatment device or system for health contaminant reduction should be made only after careful investigation of its performance capabilities based on test results from a certified lab. Testing should be conducted in accordance with state laws or guidelines to determine if any action is required. WQA recommends treatment products that have been certified. Visit WQA's product certification listings to search WQA's database of certified products. Water treatment professionals can be found using WQA's Find Water Treatment Providers tool.

### POU/POE products for lead removal

Many believe Point-of-Use/Point-of-Entry (POU/POE) products are the preferred method for lead removal, since most lead in drinking water is the result of corrosion in the water

distribution and home plumbing system. However, devices and systems currently on the market may differ widely in their effectiveness in treating specific contaminants, and performance may vary from application to application. Therefore, selection of a device or system should be made only after careful investigation of its performance capabilities based on results from competent equipment validation testing for the specific contaminant to be reduced.

## Look for certified lead reduction claim

The application of the water treatment equipment must be controlled diligently to ensure that acceptable feed water conditions and equipment capacity are not exceeded. Not all Point-of-Use drinking water treatment filters and Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems are designed to remove lead. School administrators seeking a Point-of-Use solution should look for filters with a certified lead claim under NSF/ANSI 53, or RO systems with a certified lead claim under NSF/ANSI 58.

## Meeting requirements in Safe Drinking Water Act

Product certification to the NSF/ANSI 61 standard involves testing new products off the factory line to ensure they will not leach unsafe levels of lead (and other contaminants) into drinking water. Product certification to the NSF/ANSI 372 standard involves testing the total weighted lead content of products to ensure that they meet the current requirements in the Safe Drinking Water Act.

These two standards are intended to work in tandem to ensure that new products are not leaching unsafe levels of lead, and that those products are formulated with low levels of lead content to minimize any potential that they might release large amounts of lead over time.

## Know your state's regulations

In the wake of Flint, more than 25 states have passed legislation or have bills pending that require schools test for lead in their drinking water, with an emphasis on aging schools. It's important that school administrators stay up to date on their state and local laws regarding drinking water, as well as any new regulations at the federal level.

For more information, contact WQA Government Affairs at 630-929-2537. More information on lead is available at the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) website: http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/ACCLPP/blood_lead_levels.htm.

*WQA is a not-for-profit trade association representing the residential, commercial, and industrial water treatment industry. Since 1959, the WQA Gold Seal certification program has been certifying products that contribute to the safe consumption of water. The WQA Gold Seal program is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).*

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