

2007: B7

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities
Provincial Schools Branch

FROM: Nancy Naylor
Assistant Deputy Minister

DATE: June 7, 2007

SUBJECT: **New provincial standards for flushing of school water systems**

I am writing to advise you of new province-wide requirements for the flushing and testing of water systems in schools, day nurseries and private schools. These requirements are set out in *Ontario Regulation 243/07 – Schools, Private Schools And Day Nurseries*, which was filed today and is effective immediately.

The goal of the new regulation is to provide increased protection for children, especially children under the age of seven who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead. It is a first step in the province's Lead Action Plan and reflects the advice of the provincial Advisory Council on Drinking Water Quality and Testing Standards, which identified immediate actions that could be taken to deal with the issue of lead in drinking water. The Council noted that, while its review focused on homes, its assessment and recommendations applied equally to schools and other public or private facilities.

This memorandum provides information to assist your school board in meeting the new standards and describes further steps in Ontario's action plan to ensure safe drinking water.

The final regulation detailing these new flushing and testing requirements is available on Ontario's Environmental Registry at www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry. The registry number is 010-0734.

Key provisions of this regulation are:

- Plumbing must be flushed *every day* that a school is open if the school is housed in a facility where all or part of the construction of the building was completed before January 1, 1990, or if the school is on a well rather than a municipal water system. This applies to both elementary and secondary schools.
- All other schools continue to be required to flush plumbing weekly.

- All schools on wells will also continue to operate under the testing requirements for bacteria and other contaminants including metals such as lead set out in *Ontario Regulation 170/03 – Drinking Water Systems*.
- Plumbing shall be flushed in two steps: (1) by turning on the cold water at the last tap on each branch or each run of pipe in the plumbing for at least five minutes; and (2) following step (1), turning on the cold water at every drinking water fountain and tap that is commonly used for drinking or for food preparation for at least 10 seconds.
- A record shall be kept of the date and time of every required flushing and the name of the person who performed the flushing.
- At every school, an annual sample of water must be submitted to a licensed laboratory to be tested for lead. A list of commercial laboratories licensed to test for lead in drinking water in Ontario is appended (page 4 below). The sample is to be one litre of cold water, taken on a date between June 15 and August 15 from a tap that is commonly used to provide water for human consumption. This time period is used because it represents the warmer months when the presence of any lead would be expected to be greatest. Before taking the sample, the tap must be turned on for at least five minutes, then turned off and left unused for a period of at least 30 but not more than 35 minutes.
- Laboratories are required to report adverse test results within 24 hours to the school board, the local Medical Officer of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of the Environment's Spills Action Centre.

To provide further information and support to school boards, the Ministry of Education's Regional Offices will, over the next few days, be holding information sessions by teleconference for school boards. Please identify a contact person for your board and submit his or her name and contact information by e-mail to the appropriate Regional Manager as soon as possible.

School boards should also note that the Ministry of the Environment is also proposing several additional *Safe Drinking Water Act* regulations, which would be posted for 15 days on the Environmental Registry at www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry for public comment. The registry numbers are 010-0743 and 010-0490. These proposed regulations would address increased testing in all municipal residential drinking water systems and non-municipal year round residential drinking water systems, corrosion control measures for municipal residential systems, municipal plans for mitigation, and education and information for the general public.

If you require further information about these new provincial standards, please contact Steve Mitchell, Capital Programs Branch, at (416) 325-2015 or at Steven.mitchell@ontario.ca.

Again, it should be emphasized that these new standards are effective as of today. While the new regulation extends school boards' responsibilities for ensuring the safety of drinking water in schools, the ministry recognizes that some school boards have for some time been requiring daily flushing.

The ministry believes that the new regulation represents a timely response to concerns about lead in drinking water and significantly increases the safeguards for students on a consistent, province-wide basis. We will continue to work with you and other ministries to support your board and schools in implementing these important measures.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Naylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Naylor
Assistant Deputy Minister

Copy: Chairs
Superintendents of Business and Finance
Senior Plant Officials

APPENDIX:**COMMERCIAL LABORATORIES LICENSED IN ONTARIO TO TEST FOR LEAD IN DRINKING WATER**

Contact names and addresses of these laboratories can be found on the Ministry of the Environment website <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.php>

Laboratory Name	Location
Accutest Laboratories	Nepean
AGAT Laboratories	Mississauga
ALS Laboratory Group – Environmental Division (Thunder Bay)	Thunder Bay
ALS Laboratory Group – Environmental Division (Waterloo)	Waterloo
Caduceon Environmental Laboratories - Ottawa East	Ottawa
Entech, A Division of Agri-Service Laboratory	Mississauga
Maxxam Analytics	Mississauga
Paracel Laboratories	Ottawa
SGS Environmental Services – Lakefield	Lakefield
Testmark Laboratories	Sudbury