

Water Tap



Washington's Drinking Water Newsletter

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Get the Lead Out. The Sooner, the Better!

By Carolyn Cox, Public Information Officer, Office of Drinking Water

If your Group A water system has even a whiff of lead in the distribution lines, meter boxes or other distribution system components, we need to talk—soon!

Because lead exposure can cause severe health effects, Gov. Jay Inslee set a goal of identifying all lead lines and components within two years, and removing them within 15 years.

If you're seeing dollar signs, don't despair. The governor asked us to work on ways to provide you with financial help to accomplish these goals. We're looking at prioritizing lead removal projects for Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loans (*see pg. 4*), and searching for more federal funding to help communities expedite lead removal and pay for distribution line improvements.

Although drinking water is not a primary source of lead exposure, it doesn't take much for little issues to become huge ones in the climate churned up by the lead disaster in Flint, Michigan.

Take the case of the City of Tacoma, which earlier this year experimented with a method of finding lead gooseneck pipes without having to tear up streets. They identified four services that could potentially have goosenecks connecting meter boxes to their service lines.

Water crews isolated the lines and worked to create the worst possible lead scenario within them. The lead test results were startlingly high. Unfortunately, some news reports left the impression that customers were receiving water with those high lead concentrations in their homes.

Among lessons learned, if Tacoma had collected baseline samples from inside those homes before they began their search, they would have had an easier time showing that water line test results didn't reflect customers' actual water quality.

It got worse. The resulting publicity prompted reporters to ask the Tacoma School District for its lead test results. The district dug out the 2015 results, which reported alarming lead concentrations in some fixtures not replaced after almost a year.

That accelerated a flurry of school districts wanting to test their fixtures for lead. Water labs were overwhelmed with samples and, in some cases, the school districts didn't understand the proper lead testing protocols. One district had to sample three times before it got reliable results.

Schools in your service area that want to test their fixtures may ask you for your most recent lead testing results. Rather than wait, you can help us by reaching out to schools to ask if they plan to test. If they do plan to test, urge them to contact us for technical assistance because the protocols for schools are very different from those of public water systems. It's all laid out in a publication called *3 Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools*, available at www.doh.wa.gov/LeadInSchools.

Lead is going to be with us for a long time. The more we can do now to identify lead lines and components and develop a plan for removing them, the better off we'll all be.

Photo: A lead "gooseneck" service line connector. Photo courtesy City of Bremerton

"Although drinking water is not a primary source of lead exposure, it doesn't take much for little issues to become huge ones in the climate churned up by the lead disaster in Flint, Michigan."

Meet Our New Director, and a Word About Lead

By Mike Means, Acting Director

I'm excited to introduce our new Director, Garin Schrieve. Garin has implemented programs to protect human health and the environment for 24 years. He's worked on contaminated site cleanup, solid waste management, water quality protection, and air pollution control. Most recently, he led the Department of Ecology's Industrial Section.

"I'm excited to join the Office of Drinking Water team and look forward to meeting as many of our partners as possible in the coming months," he told us. "As I step into this new role, I'm interested in hearing ideas about how we can best support our partners in ensuring safe, reliable drinking water and build the public's understanding and confidence in what comes out of their tap."

He worked with utility districts, towns and cities to plan, permit and finance infrastructure projects and served on the steering committee for the Small Communities Initiative, a collaboration among the departments of Health, Ecology and Commerce to support capacity building, infrastructure funding, and regulatory compliance for small towns and utility districts.

Garin earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Humboldt State University, a master's degree in engineering



New ODW Director Garin Schrieve

from the University of Washington, and is a licensed professional engineer in Washington State.

Governor Acts on Lead

Now some information on lead. Recently, Gov. Jay Inslee directed the Department of Health to eliminate as much lead as possible from the environment (see below). We're creating a stakeholder group to help us get this and other tasks done. Our budget and policy recommendations are due to the governor by October.

The governor's directive includes several tasks for us:

- ◆ Prioritize removal of lead service lines and other lead components in water distribution systems when considering funding proposals for low-interest Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loans.
- ◆ Work with Group A systems to identify all lead service lines and components within two years and ensure systems remove those components within 15 years.
- ◆ Work with stakeholder groups to develop policy and budgetary proposals to fund removal of all lead service lines and components in Group A public water systems within 15 years.
- ◆ Work with Ecology and EPA to seek additional federal assistance, including more funds to help communities expedite lead removal.
- ◆ Support revisions to the federal Lead and Copper Rule.

As I prepare to return to my duties as deputy director for operations, I thank each of you for your support and your continued efforts to maintain safe and reliable drinking water.

Check-up on Fluoride

By Nina Helpling, Water QA Specialist

Changes to the Fluoride Rule (WAC 246-290-460) went into effect May 9, 2016. The rule sets the optimal level of fluoride in drinking water at 0.7 milligram per liter (mg/L). Beginning this month, fluoridating water systems must use Department of Health Monthly Operation Reports.*

Other changes:

- ◆ Water systems must notify us before they permanently discontinue fluoridation.

- ◆ New terminology:

Operating Tolerance: Daily sample results must fall between 0.5–0.9 mg/L.

Off Measure: The drinking water certified lab result differs from the water system's analytical result by more than 0.2 mg/L.

- ◆ Starting in January 2017, we will automatically enroll water systems that fluoridate in the Fluoride Treatment Optimization Program. Details will follow shortly.

- ◆ In January 2017, we also will start logging water system fluoridation performance into the CDC's Water Fluoridation Reporting Systems (WFRS). This program will give Washington's fluoridating systems the potential for national performance recognition. You can view other states' WFRS data on the "My Water's Fluoridation" portal at https://nccd.cdc.gov/DOH_MWF/Default/Default.aspx

* Forms and related guidance are online at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/FluorideinDrinkingWater/FluorideforWaterSystems>

Vandalism or Terrorism?

By Greg McKnight, Emergency Planner and Legislative Liaison

Summer brings a flurry of water system improvements to do along with normal operations and maintenance. As you prepare to upgrade a 20-inch diameter supply main to allow operation at increased supply pressure, or a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System, don't forget to gear up for another common summer issue—water system intruders.

Summer is a time when some school age youth engage in mischief. Several systems recently experienced a series of intrusion incidents. While most of these activities are benign, they are a good reminder to stay prepared for the threat of water system intruders.

Recently Tony Utanis and Shaun Piper, water operators at the City of Sumner, noted some missing locks. They immediately contacted their public works director and called our Northwest Regional Office where Derek Pell, assistant regional manager, greeted them.

Recalling lessons learned from a previous higher-threat incident, Pell asked Utanis and Piper to complete the Threat Evaluation Worksheet and the Security Incident Report Form in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's EPA Response Protocol Toolbox: Planning for and Responding to Drinking Water Contamination Threats and Incidents. Next, Pell and the operators used

the publication's Security Breach Threat Matrix to characterize the breach as the lowest threat risk.

After closing the valve to isolate the reservoir, they continued to use the guidance to collect appropriate samples. They tested the PH and conductivity on site. About four days later the lab analyses were clear, allowing them to reopen the reservoir.

Lessons Learned

Always contact local law enforcement if you suspect a breach in your water system security.

Cameras could expedite reopening a water system asset by giving a better comparison between a vandal and someone intent on harming your customers.

Prioritize areas of your watershed that need additional fencing, or barriers.

Perform a "paper" review of interties, MOUs and other alternate water assets.

If an intrusion requires you to take a water asset off line until you get satisfactory sampling results, your system may need to get water from another source.

Know what you need to do to activate



Intruder Alert

your alternate resources. You'll need that information to prepare for water loss incidents related to drought and flood, too.

Use normal operations and maintenance sampling to develop seasonal or quarterly profiles of your water system. By comparing this background characterization of your water system to your facilities following an intrusion, you may be able to bring your facilities back on line quicker.

You can get EPA's *Drinking Water Utility Response Protocol Toolbox* by searching for "DWRPTB" at www.epa.gov.

Keep calling DOH as quickly as you have been! Protecting public health is our mission. We are grateful for your commitments to partnership and safe and reliable drinking water.

Waterworks Operator Certification Program Update

New single operator certification application: July 2016 a new, single application will replace many of the applications that operators submit for different certification requests. Operators can apply for exams, reciprocity, upgrades, and temporary certifications using the single certification application. (Before applying for a temporary operator certification, contact Diana Thieme at the Waterworks Operator

Certification Program at 1-800-525-2536, ext. 2).

Operator In-Training to all certification levels: Many water utilities struggle with succession planning due to the increasing numbers of certified operators retiring from the workforce. Many operators want to further their careers and show prospective employers they have the knowledge to work at a higher level, but lack the necessary

experience to become certified at that level. To meet this need, the Waterworks Operator Certification Program expanded our operator in-training certifications to apply to all levels of operator certification.

Updating the Waterworks Operator Certification Program website: Learn more about these exciting changes at www.doh.wa.gov/OpCert.

Have You Filed Your Water Use Efficiency Report?

By Mike Dexel, Senior Water Resources Planner

The deadline for submitting your annual Water Use Efficiency (WUE) Report was July 1. Visit our website, www.doh.wa.gov/WUE, to submit your annual WUE report if you haven't already done so.

Don't forget to send your WUE Report to your customers in your Consumer Confidence Report, a bill stuffer, or your utility newsletter. You'll also want to share the progress you've made installing meters.

Metering Deadline Draws Near

All Group A community water systems with at least 15 residential service connections must install service meters by January 22, 2017. Meters are important because they help to identify water usage throughout the community. They can also help you determine whether your water system meets the 10 percent efficiency standard established in state law.

To date, about 1,144 water systems installed meters on 100 percent of their

service connections. Congratulations to them all! If you're still working to meet the deadline, read on.

Answers to common questions: We created online resources to help you discuss the value of meters with homeowners and your governing board. You can find them at doh.wa.gov/watermeters.

Funding for water systems: For the 2016 construction loan funding cycle, public water systems can use Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) to install meters, but ONLY if metering is part of a larger improvement project.



Photo: A new water meter, installed and ready to go. © 2016 Drew Noble

Funding for very low-income homeowners: USDA Rural Development may loan qualified homeowners the financing needed to cover the cost of materials and labor to install meters. The interest rate is 1 percent. To find out whether a homeowner qualifies, visit www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/4200/rd-funds.pdf

If you have questions or need technical assistance, visit www.doh.wa.gov/WUE or contact your regional planner.

NOW AVAILABLE: Loans to Replace Lead Pipes

By Janet Cherry, DWSRF Program Manager

Eligible water systems can apply for loans to cover the cost of replacing lead pipes and lead components in the 2016 loan cycle. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) considers lead pipes and components as containing at least 90 percent or more lead by weight.

Lead pipe and component replacement projects will qualify as Risk Category 2 Projects if:

- Water systems can document the presence of lead service lines or other lead components. Acceptable documentation includes installation records, line repair information, as-built documentation, and information on the age of the houses that indicate a high probability for presence of lead pipes and components.

- At least 51 percent of the project construction cost is for replacement of lead pipes or lead components.

Water systems must provide temporary access and construction easements to allow the cultural review, environmental review, and construction activities to occur for replacement of lead service lines. DWSRF doesn't require permanent easements for the new service lines. However, if the water system requires a permanent easement for the project, the costs associated with establishing it are eligible for reimbursement.

The project proposed to replace lead pipes and lead components must be in

the water system's approved Water System Plan or Small Water System Management Program. Contact our regional engineer and the planner assigned to your county to discuss ways to include the proposed project in an approved planning document.

Replacement of service lines, mains, and components that contain a small amount of lead, such as brass meter settings, brass valves, galvanized pipe, or cast iron pipe, will be classified in Risk Category 5.

DWSRF will award principal forgiveness, or subsidy, based on the affordability index or debt-service coverage ratio of the entire water system.

The DWSRF construction loan cycle is open from August 1 to September 30, 2016, and will have about \$35 million available for projects, with a \$3 million maximum award per entity. Guidelines for the construction loan funding cycle are at www.doh.wa.gov/DWSRF.



Clockwise, from left: Ron Slabaugh; Roger Maurer, Teresa Walker, and Kenneth Stone; Bonnie Waybright and Charles "Brig" Belvin; Paul Kamin; John Wiesman and Mark Leenhouts.

Drinking Water Week Awards

By Elizabeth Hyde, Outreach Coordinator

Water is essential to human life. From safe, reliable drinking water for families, to industry and agriculture, water touches everyone. It takes a vast amount of knowledge, dedication, and hard work to operate a water system. Every year, during National Drinking Water Week, we honor the hardworking individuals who ensure that we have safe water. We honored six individuals this year who dedicate their lives to the demanding job of owning or operating a water system.

Mark Leenhouts, Spokane County "Above and Beyond"

Mark Leenhouts owns and operates the Fairchild Mobile Home Community Water System. Last November, after the worst Spokane-area windstorm on record, Leenhouts and his sons worked around the clock to fuel the generators to keep the water and sewer systems from freezing. Leenhouts used his own resources to provide heaters and fuel for residents who sheltered in place. His efforts prevented significant damage to the water system, sewer discharge system, and residents' homes. Secretary of Health John Wiesman recognized Leenhouts on Thursday, May 5, at the Fairchild Mobile Home Community offices in Medical Lake.

Ron Slabaugh, Chelan County "Grace Under Fire"

Slabaugh's heroic efforts kept the water running while firefighters battled the Sleepy Hollow wildfires that threatened Wenatchee homes and businesses last June. By using PUD backup wells, Wenatchee City water, and other water resources, Slabaugh and his team supplied 6 million gallons of water—enough to fight the fires and keep the water system pressurized. Slabaugh received congratulations from Mike Means, acting director, Mike Wilson, engineer in our Eastern Regional Office, and Scott Mallery, assistant Eastern Regional manager, at the April 18 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Roger Maurer and Kenneth Stone, Cowlitz County "Friends of Drinking Water"

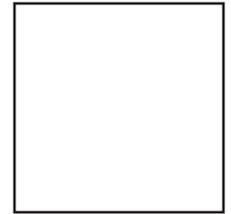
Teresa Walker, engineer in our Southwest Regional office, recognized Roger Maurer and Kenneth Stone on May 2, for their hard work bringing the Columbia Crest Estates water system into compliance with the arsenic rule, a years-long challenge. Maurer and Stone, with the Cowlitz County Public Works Department, took on this long-term project, coordinating the planning and work, and applying for and managing the funding.

Paul Kamin, San Juan County "Commitment to Excellence"

Four people nominated Paul Kamin, chair of the San Juan County Water Resources Committee, for his work as a water conservationist and advocate. He led efforts to update the Eastsound water system infrastructure and technology, providing for new growth and conserving water resources. He communicated clearly to customers during last summer's drought and led successful efforts to conserve water during peak demand times. We presented Paul's award at the Eastsound Water Users Association board meeting on Thursday, May 5.

Charles H. "Brig" Belvin, Cowlitz County "Above and Beyond"

Charles Belvin lives in Columbia Crest Estates. He was retired—until the water system had numerous, serious problems. He became a water system expert and organized the residents into a water association to take over the water system. For seven-plus years, he worked with the Office of Drinking Water, Cowlitz Public Works, and others to solve the problems. He received his award on May 2 from Bonnie Waybright, Southwest Regional Office Manager.



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Water Tap Congratulates Marion Water Company

The Marion Water Company formed 80 years ago to supply water to dairy farms between Buckley and Bonnie Lake. In 2009, using a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan the company drilled a new well and built a 110,000-gallon reservoir. This expanded their capacity and enabled them to overcome a moratorium against expansion. That accomplished, they could acquire Golden Valley Estates, a tiny system serving 99 homes in an over-55 community.

For years prior to the consolidation, Golden Valley Estates struggled with nitrate-contaminated wells, and it had the dubious honor of being Pierce County's lone nitrate maximum contaminant level violator. Marion Water Company switched Golden Valley's water source from the contaminated wells to its own water sources, eliminating the nitrate problem.

We applaud the Marion Water Company Board and Operator for its exceptional achievement in overcoming obstacles to expand and provide their customers with safe and reliable drinking water. They now serve more than 350 customers and have 15 miles of water main.



Photo © ryencsilva/photo