
From: Murray, David (GOV)
Sent: Friday, December 04, 2015 11:57 AM
To: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Subject: RE: Eisenhower piece

Bryn is at bmickle1@michigan.gov

I don't think it will make a difference, but I want to put them on notice that we are pointing out to them wholly inaccurate things in the stories. If you think it is more appropriate for me to reach out to Bryn, I can do that.

From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Friday, December 04, 2015 11:42 AM
To: Fonger, Ronald (RFONGER1@mlive.com) <RFONGER1@mlive.com>
Subject: Eisenhower piece

Hey, Ron.

I continue to have concerns about how the Journal reports this issue. Here are a few from yesterday.

The headline is factually incorrect. Plumbing and fixtures are not the same thing at all. In fact, I sent a note to you guys when I advanced you this piece which specifically said our findings are good news because fixtures are less expensive to replace than plumbing, and our testing indicates there are no deeper plumbing issues so far in the schools we're checking.

More to the point, these two adjoining paragraphs in the story don't even agree:

The DEQ says the leaching lead is likely because of the fixtures and the connected plumbing in the building — lead solder joints on copper piping, brass valves and brass fittings, brass components in fixtures and galvanized piping.

"The highest contribution of lead appears to be from the individual faucet/fountains and not from the larger diameter supply plumbing within the main school building or the two out building units," the report says.

This paragraph offers a wholly inaccurate reflection of what's going on:

"The more thorough testing at Eisenhower comes after three Flint school buildings tested above the federal limit in initial screenings prompted by the discovery of rising levels of lead in Flint children's blood. Eisenhower was one of those schools, along with the Brownell school building and Freeman Elementary."

The testing of every Flint school was part of the commitment in the Governor's 10-point plan. The findings at all the schools have consistently shown limited instances of initial high samples, specifically associated with limited points in the building, where spikes are followed by dramatic

drops on subsequent draws – clear indication that the lead exposure is limited to faucets and bubblers that should have been replaced a long time ago.

Also, I realize you guys can't say "lead" without saying "toxic," but please don't attribute that to the DEQ. We recognize the levels at some points are elevated.

The results of follow-up testing at Freeman were released Nov. 9, and showed nine of 31 faucets had toxic lead levels, the DEQ said.

I'd like to meet for lunch or coffee next week, get caught up and generally have a discussion beyond phone and email. Happy to drive there for it. Let me know if you've got a date better than others. I'm best Tuesday or Wednesday, and can make any day work except Monday.

Thanks,

b

http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/12/18/faucets_at_flints_eisenhowe.html#incart_2box_news_flint

New tests show toxic lead in plumbing at Flint elementary schools

FLINT, MI – Recent water tests at a Flint elementary found toxic lead levels at faucets and drinking fountains, a problem state officials largely attribute to the type of fixtures in the school building.

The report on Flint's Eisenhower Elementary showed 18 of 43 water outlets had lead levels above 15 parts per billion at least once during testing, exceeding the action limit set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The report was based on water samples collected by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality on Oct. 30-31, and included testing from all 43 water fixtures in the school and two out buildings on the property.

The DEQ says the leaching lead is likely because of the fixtures and the connected plumbing in the building -- lead solder joints on copper piping, brass valves and brass fittings, brass components in fixtures and galvanized piping.

"The highest contribution of lead appears to be from the individual faucet/fountains and not from the larger diameter supply plumbing within the main school building or the two out building units," the report says.

The results of follow-up testing at Freeman were released Nov. 9, and showed nine of 31 faucets had toxic lead levels, the DEQ said. Those results were also attributed to the fixtures or connected plumbing.

While the DEQ recommends the school district replace the hardware, if that is not possible running the water "for three minutes following periods of stagnation is likely to reduce lead concentrations and lead exposure," the report said.

The DEQ said when the faucets and fountains at Freeman were operated for several minutes, lead levels fell significantly, in some cases to non-detectable levels.

"The data is part of a clearly emerging trend that points to fixtures as a source of lead exposure," Brad Wurfel, spokesman for the DEQ, said in an email.

For a permanent solution, the school should opt to replace the faucets and fountains of concern, the DEQ said.

The superintendent issued a statement last month after the Freeman Elementary test results were released.

"Flint Community Schools will implement a comprehensive district-wide solution to repair and replace all the affected fixtures and faucets," Superintendent Bilal Tawwab said. "We want to look at all the buildings and what needs to be done. We want to get the job done right so our students have access to safe water."

The city ended its use of the Flint River for drinking water after researchers at Virginia Tech found high levels of lead in water at some Flint homes, and concluded that Flint River water was more corrosive than the city's previous water source, Lake Huron water via the Detroit water and sewer department.

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha of Hurley Medical Center also found elevated blood lead levels in Flint children.

Flint eventually changed back to purchasing water from the city of Detroit in mid-October, but experts have said it would take weeks to clear the remnants of river water out of transmission pipes.

Even after that point, the U.S. EPA has said residents still should be warned of the potential risk of increased lead in drinking water when crews do underground work that might dislodge lead scale and sediment in city water pipes.

Wurfel said the DEQ has posted homeowner water test results at its Flint Water site, www.michigan.gov/flintwater. Those test results "appear to show the same trend and underscore that lead is site specific," he said.

"Homeowners with lead in their home plumbing systems – whether that is faucets of copper plumbing or a lead service line – should continue using the free lead filters, take advantage of free home water testing from the city, and if they've got kids, get them tested for blood lead levels," Wurfel said.

-Staff Writer Ron Fonger contributed to this report.

Dominic Adams is a reporter for The Flint Journal. Contact him at dadams5@flintjournal.com or 810-241-8803. Follow him on Twitter, Facebook or Google+.

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