

Brighton schools find lead in some tap water

Lead

Readings better after lines flushed; 8 taps are shut off

NO REPORTS OF POISONING

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The Brighton Central School District found elevated levels of lead in some water sources in its schools, it announced Friday.

The district tested 238 sources and found 62 that had elevated lead levels. It then flushed the lines — lead tends to build up more quickly in fixtures that are used infrequently — and got acceptable readings at all but eight taps.

Those remaining taps have been disconnected, according to a release from the district.

Of the original 62 taps with high readings, 21 were at the administrative building, 14 were at Brighton High School, 14 were at the Brookside building, nine were at Council Rock Primary School, nine were at French Road Elementary School and two were at Twelve Corners Middle School.

The taps with persistent elevated lead levels were:

- » Two water fountains and two sink faucets at Brighton High School.
- » One sink faucet at Twelve Corners Middle School.
- » One water fountain and one sink faucet at the Brookside building.
- » One sink faucet at the administration building.

The federal threshold for lead in water is 15 parts per billion. The levels at most of the affected faucets were between 15 and 80 parts per billion, but some were much higher. A drinking fountain outside Room

See **LEAD**, Page **15A**

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DON CASE

GENESEE VALLEY EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Continued from Page 1A

114 in the high school, for instance, registered 480.

The state and Monroe County health departments “do not think the school drinking water is a significant source of lead,” according to the district, and there have been no reports of lead poisoning in children. The district has hired a consultant to monitor the water quality going forward.

Schools are not required to test water inside their buildings for lead. Water is tested at its source, but can pick up lead as it passes through deteriorating infrastructure.

No Monroe County schools test regularly for lead in their water but recently have expressed interest in doing so after the crisis in Flint, Michigan, as well as reports of elevated lead levels in some Southern Tier schools, including Ithaca. The Rochester City School District tested 10 years ago and found elevated levels of lead in nearly 10 percent of its taps.

Brighton has tested its water for several years and always flushed the pipes when it found elevated lead levels, spokesman Dan Goldman said. This was the first year the district took the additional step of doing post-flush testing.

On Friday, Pittsford Central School District Superintendent Michael Pero announced that his district hired a thirdparty testing firm to check water quality in all drinking fountains, food preparation and consumable water spigots in school buildings. He said the district does not have any information that indicates there is a water quality problem, but is testing out of an abundance of caution.

“We hope to have results returned to us expeditiously,” he said in a written statement. “The findings will be shared in an effort to provide full transparency.”

Don Case, supervisor of health and safety services at Genesee Valley Educational Partnership, said it is not necessarily surprising, or a cause for panic, for a school to find high lead levels in some water sources.

“It’s a function of the age of the building, the quality of the water and the usage of the fixtures,” he said. “Based on what’s happened in Ithaca, that might not surprise me.”

He also noted that children ingest much less water at school than they do at home, decreasing the danger.

Brighton conducted the broad test of its water sources after earlier, more limited testing found problems in four places. Those taps were also taken offline or replaced.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said earlier this week he would push for \$100 million in federal grant funding for districts to test for lead in their water.

On Friday, he said the Brighton findings underscore the importance of that funding.

“Yet another one of our schools finding lead in the drinking water underlines the need to pass my new legislation that pays for schools to test for lead as step one in a plan to prevent exposure,” he said. “The bottom line is that we must protect our children, whose bodies and brains are most vulnerable to the pernicious effects of lead poisoning.”

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