

## Samples show high lead levels

### Penfield school tests yield high results

SEAN LAHMAN

@SEANLAHMAN

Officials with the Penfield School District said they've found elevated lead levels in water samples taken from all six of their school buildings.

In a letter sent to parents Thursday morning, Superintendent Thomas K. Putnam said test results showed lead levels above the EPA standard in 31 of 210 samples tested.

According to the letter, high levels were found at the following locations:

- » Cobbles Elementary – 9 devices
- » Scribner Elementary – 8 devices
- » Indian Landing Elementary – 5 devices
- » Harris Hill Elementary – 3 devices
- » Bay Trail Middle School – 2 devices
- » Penfield High School – 3 devices
- » Bus garage – 1 device Putnam said that 30 of the 31 devices had levels of between 15 parts per billion, the EPA standard, and 45 parts per billion.

A level of 120 ppb was found in one location at a teacher workroom sink at Scribner Road School. That sink is not used by students, Putnam said.

“It is not unusual for fixtures in older buildings to have slightly elevated results, especially when the water has been sitting for some time,” he said. “However, out of an abundance of caution, we have taken all of these devices offline until we complete the retesting.”

The district will conduct more testing this week, following the EPA's recommendation to flush lines before taking samples. Putnam said the district expects many of the devices will fall below the EPA standard with those tests. “We will continue to consult with the Monroe County Health Department on our next steps, including retesting and mitigation measures,” Putnam said. “Although the Health Department does not believe school drinking water is a significant source of lead, we continue to take this situation seriously, and will keep you informed as we move forward with this process.” The lead detected at the Penfield schools, like the lead found recently in water at six Brighton Central School District buildings, leaches out of lead pipes or the lead solder on the joints of pipes that carry water into and around the schools. Local drinking water, drawn primarily from Lake Ontario and Hemlock and Canadice lakes south of Rochester, does not contain appreciable amounts of lead. As the Penfield statement noted, experts say lead-paint dust and chips typically pose a bigger threat to children than lead in drinking water.

Still, in light of nationwide concern driven by the discovery that the drinking water in Flint, Michigan, contained high levels of the toxic metal, many school districts are voluntarily checking their supplies.

Locally, Churchville-Chili, East Irondequoit, Fairport, Gates Chili, Greece, Hilton, Pittsford, Spencerport, Webster, West Irondequoit and Wheatland-Chili school districts have announced they're going to sample water from drinking fountains and other sources for lead. Brockport Central said its water already is sampled for lead by the village of Brockport.

The largest local district, Rochester, has said it does not sample drinking water in its schools for lead and has announced no plan to begin doing so.

*SLAHMAN@Gannett*

*.com*

*Includes reporting by Staff Writer Steve Orr*



**This file photo shows containers filled with water samples collected for lead screening.**

**JAMIE GERMANO/@JGERMANO1/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**