

Burley Glenwood Elementary takes taps offline after lead testing

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South Kitsap School District logo (Photo: South Kitsap School District logo)

SOUTH KITSAP — Roughly a third of the drinking water fixtures at Burley Glenwood Elementary School are being taken offline following water testing in January that showed elevated lead levels.

Bottled water is being provided to students and staff in the 400 classroom wing of the school, but that has been a longstanding practice, according to South Kitsap School District officials.

The district tested 58 fixtures 19 of which showed lead levels above 20 parts per billion (ppb), the level at which the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Environmental Protection Agency recommend schools take corrective action.

The fixtures were taken offline as soon as the district got the results, and bottled water is being distributed in affected areas of the school, Superintendent Tim Winter said in a letter to families Wednesday.

The district is working with the Department of Health on a longterm plan that likely will include replacing the problem fixtures with certified lead-free fixtures and other safety measures.

Three fixtures at South Colby Elementary had lead levels above the 20 ppb. Those fixtures were taken out of service, according to a letter sent to families on Feb. 5.

The district has been doing routine water testing (<http://archive.kitsapsun.com/news/local/sk-among-school-districts-to-start-voluntary-lead-testing-of-water-360b5fb9-2105-50db-e053-0100007f0-384467481.html>) in coordination with the Department of Health. In 2017, the Legislature provided funding to the DOH to test for lead in public schools' drinking water (<https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/tZPRCyPAVriN6y49xsZSXYp?domain=doh.wa.gov>). The program received continued funding for 2020 and 2021.

The testing is voluntary and aimed at reducing children's overall exposure to lead in the environment.

"There's no amount of lead in the water that's safe. The target is zero, but that's not possible, so we work with the schools to make sure there's the lowest level of lead possible," said Kay Rottell, assistant southwest drinking water regional manager for the DOH.

About 500 schools around the state have been tested since 2018. Other Kitsap districts that have participated so far are Bainbridge Island, Bremerton and North Kitsap, according to test results posted on the DOH website (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/Contaminants/Lead/LeadinSchools/Results>). Central Kitsap School District has also taken part in voluntary water testing.

More: [Kitsap schools keeping a close watch on lead in drinking water \(/story/news/2018/09/13/kitsap-school-districts-water-samples-reduce-risk-lead-exposure/1271975002/\)](https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/2018/09/13/kitsap-school-districts-water-samples-reduce-risk-lead-exposure/1271975002/)

South Kitsap on Jan. 10 notified families that elementary schools were scheduled for the first round of testing Jan. 9 through 31. Results received to date include four other schools beside Burley Glenwood:

- At South Colby, where the three fixtures were taken offline, eight other fixtures out of 37 tested had measurable levels of lead that were below the action level of 20 ppb, according to the district.
- At Hidden Creek Elementary, 62 fixtures were tested and 38 had measurable lead below the action level.
- At Sunnyslope Elementary 71 fixtures were tested, with 16 showing measurable levels of lead below the action level.
- At Manchester Elementary, 67 fixtures were tested and 48 had measurable levels of lead below the action level.

At all these schools, the district is developing a flushing program to reduce lead levels that may increase in fixtures when they are not in use. The district will implement regular cleaning of aerators. And longterm, there's a plan to replace old fixtures with lead-free fixtures.

Lead in drinking water is not a common source of lead poisoning, according to health officials.

More: [Water is not the most common source of lead poisoning \(/story/news/local/2018/09/13/kitsap-county-public-health-water-lead-paint-poisoning/1261456002/\)](https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2018/09/13/kitsap-county-public-health-water-lead-paint-poisoning/1261456002/)

Children are exposed to lead from a number of environmental sources, said Amy Bertrand, lead poisoning prevention manager for the DOH. Lead paint in homes built before 1978 is a big concern among health officials because of the high levels of lead often associated with this exposure.

Other significant sources of lead include dust from parents' jobs or hobbies, certain ceramics, toys and toy jewelry.

Parents worried about possible exposure should contact their physician and ask for their child's blood lead level to be tested.

"The kids who are most susceptible to the effects of lead are age 6 and younger and really age 3 and younger because they're on the floor and likely to ingest lead by putting their hands in their mouths," Bertrand said. "Those are really the kids we are concerned about."

Bertrand said she's glad to see schools participating in the voluntary water testing program because the goal is to reduce children's cumulative exposure to lead.

"I feel like the schools are doing the right thing and we appreciate their cooperation," she said.

Update: This story was updated on Feb. 13, 2019, to clarify that bottled water has been provided in one wing of the school for a number of years.

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