



## Lead Contamination in Wisconsin

Wisconsin, with its many lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, is a state defined by its water. However, Wisconsin's current water management system is failing to protect citizens across the state. Lead contamination from corroded water pipes and fixtures threatens the water supply and health of tens of thousands of Wisconsin residents.

Lead poisoning is especially damaging to children, as it can lead to reduced IQ and attention span, learning disabilities, development delays and a range of other permanent health and behavioral effects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that there is no safe lead blood level in children. Wisconsin needs a water management system that is fair, equitable and ensures clean and plentiful water to all residents.

Sierra Club's *Lead Contamination in Wisconsin (May 2017)* white paper highlights the threats of lead contamination in Wisconsin.

- 4.5 percent of Wisconsin children tested with elevated blood lead levels, compared to 4.9 percent in Flint, MI.
- Lead poisoning is extremely harmful to children, as it may lead to reduced IQ, learning disabilities, and development delays.
- Lead poisoning causes nearly 10 percent of all intellectual disabilities of otherwise unknown cause.
- Over 176,000 Wisconsin homes, schools and business receive water from lead service lines.
- Twenty-four of 72 Wisconsin counties had lead levels six times the federal safety level in their water systems.
- 88 percent of all Wisconsin children testing positive for lead poisoning were enrolled in Medicaid.
- \$28 billion in costs and earnings would be saved if no children were exposed to lead.
- Eighty-one WI water systems exceeded the EPA limits for lead between 2012 and 2015.

It is a sad truth that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we are still talking about lead from drinking water. We know the solutions to the problem. It is simply a matter creating the political will to provide the resources and mechanisms to implement them.

If Wisconsin is to safeguard drinking water of all citizens and prevent public health and other society costs in the years to come a strategy is needed that includes:

- Widespread testing of all children in daycares and schools to understand the full extent of lead poisoning throughout the state.
- Annual public education to inform consumers when drinking water exceeds the action level for lead and ways to take preventative action.
- The requirement for all landlords to test water for lead and disclose results to prospective tenants if lead is detected, as proposed in Senate Bill 41
- The ability for water utilities to provide assistance to customers in replacing lead service lines if local ordinance allows them to do so, as proposed in Senate Bill 48.

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