



Waterlines

MAY 2016

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MEDFORD WATER COMMISSION



Bus tours offered

Tours to the Big Butte Springs and Robert A. Duff Water Treatment Plant will again be available this summer.

The dates for these tours will be June 23 and September 13, with attendance limited to one bus per tour date.

Register to join us if you would like to learn more about your drinking water, including where it comes from and what treatment it receives.

Participants should be prepared to be gone most of the day, departing at 9 a.m., and returning around 4:30 p.m.

To register or obtain more information, call 541-774-2458.

Committed to:

Excellence in Water Quality
Professionalism
Customer Satisfaction
System Reliability

Contact us:

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www.medfordwater.org

WATER QUALITY REPORT AVAILABLE

The Medford Water Commission is pleased to announce that our annual water quality report is now available.

The report includes water quality testing results for the year 2015, along with information explaining what the results mean. Information on the sources of our drinking water is also included.

Access the report at www.medfordwater.org/WaterQualityReport.pdf

Or, call 541-774-2430 to request a copy by mail. Paper copies are also available at our office in the Lausmann Annex at Medford City Hall, 200 S. Ivy, Room 177.



Ahora se puede ver el informe anual sobre la calidad de su agua en línea en la página web: www.medfordwater.org/CalidadDelAgua.pdf

Por favor llame a 541-774-2430 si desea una copia en papel por correo.

LET'S TALK ABOUT LEAD

Following the discovery of high levels of lead in the drinking water in Flint, Mich., water quality has been the subject of many news stories over the past few months. This has caused people throughout the nation to have questions about their own community's water supplies and how they compare. The following information is provided in an effort to answer common questions.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead typically doesn't come from the water source or treatment plant. Rather, lead and other metals enter drinking water primarily through household plumbing and/or the service lines that connect a community's water mains to customers' faucets.

Is there lead in Medford water?

Medford's distribution system is not known to include lead service lines, which have been a significant source of lead exposure in other cities. However,

our customers are encouraged to be aware of their own plumbing, as solders and fixtures may contain lead.

Lead is tested for at customers' faucets under procedures specified in the EPA Lead and Copper Rule. If more than 10 percent of homes sampled fail to meet the standard, the water provider must take additional actions. While other Oregon communities, including Portland, have been subject to further actions, it has been rare for any samples not to meet the standard in the homes tested within the MWC system.

Are current rules sufficient?

Water quality rules continue to evolve as more information becomes available. The Lead and Copper Rule has been undergoing a major review for several years, and a draft is expected in 2017. It is not yet known how significant the changes will be.

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WATER QUALITY

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How does the situation in Flint differ from Medford?

Unlike Flint and many older cities, the use of lead service lines was not common within our water system. While we are fortunate not to have miles of lead pipes, MWC is following the issue closely and is currently examining whether there are any additional steps we should take to go beyond state and federal regulations.

As your water experts, we encourage customers to be aware that there are sources of lead within household plumbing systems, including the common use of lead solder prior to 1986. Other metals, including brass, may contain lead, and these have been widely used as internal components in plumbing fixtures.

Water's specific chemistry can also impact the extent to which it leaches or dissolves lead and other metals. Some water tends to leave deposits in pipes and plumbing fixtures, while other water is considered corrosive. These pose differing challenges, but water that is corrosive will facilitate the leaching of metals into the water,

particularly when sitting for extended periods. Flint's situation was made much worse by a change in the source of their water to a supply that was much more corrosive than the prior source. This dramatically accelerated the leaching of lead from the pipes, resulting in high lead levels in the water.

While testing under current rules has not shown MWC's water to be highly susceptible to leaching lead, our water is considered corrosive, so there is reason to be mindful of minimizing exposure to lead, copper and other metals.

What are other sources of exposure to lead?

Blood-lead levels have decreased tremendously since leaded gasoline, once the nation's No. 1 source of lead exposure, was phased out in the 1980s. Today, lead paint dust and chips are the most common source of lead exposure in Oregon, according to the Oregon Health Authority. Lead-based paints have been banned from household use since 1978, but many homes built before the ban still contain lead paint – and just a few particles of dust from lead-based paint can be hazardous to children. For more information, call the National Lead Information Centers at 800-424-LEAD (5323) or visit leadfreekids.org.

Who is most at risk?

Infants, young children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults. In children, low levels of lead exposure have been linked to learning disabilities, shorter stature and damage to the brain and kidneys.

Homes built prior to 1986 are most likely to have piping or solders containing lead, whereas copper is more likely to be found with newer construction. If you observe staining or detect a metallic taste, the following actions may be particularly beneficial. However, be aware that lead is colorless and tasteless.

How can I reduce exposure to lead in drinking water?

- **Run water briefly to flush lines.** If water has not been used for several hours, such as in the morning or after returning from work or school, run taps for 30 seconds to 2 minutes, or until it becomes colder, before drinking or cooking. This will flush water that has been sitting in pipes. If you run a load of laundry or shower first, you will not need to run the tap as long.

- **Use cold water for cooking and drinking.** Lead dissolves more easily into hot water, so don't use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula, or for cooking or drinking.

- **Consider buying low-lead faucets.** As of January 2014, all pipes, fittings and fixtures are required to contain less than 0.25% lead, which is termed "lead-free." In addition to seeking out products with the lowest lead content, fixtures with the WaterSense label will maximize water savings.

- **Clean your faucet aerator.** Particles containing lead from solder or household plumbing can become trapped in your faucet aerator. Occasional cleaning will remove these particles and reduce your exposure to lead.

- **Consider use of filters.** Check first whether they reduce lead – not all filters do. Remember that bacteria and other contaminants can collect in filters if not properly maintained, making water quality worse, not better. For water filter performance standards, visit nsf.org or contact NSF International at 1-800-673-8010.

MWC cares about the health of families in our community, and we encourage customers to investigate their home plumbing and, where warranted, take steps to minimize their exposure to lead, copper and other metals at their taps. We also encourage you to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding the quality of your drinking water.

Waterlines

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Medford Water Commission

Established in 1922 and governed by the Board of Water Commissioners.

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