



April 13, 2016

Dear Public Housing Residents and Employees,

The health and safety of public housing residents, employees and your drinking water is our top priority. With recent attention on lead levels in tap water around the country, we wanted to assure you that New York City's water is safe, including the water at your development. In fact, lead poisoning among New York City children has decreased 80 percent since 2002.

New York City has excellent water quality.

New York City's drinking water is of the highest quality, meeting or exceeding all federal and State standards. The City regulates and protects its own watershed and reservoirs, and the water quality is tested more than 500,000 times each year at various points throughout the system.

In these over 500,000 tests, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) tests for more than 250 different types of contaminants. In addition to these safety measures, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) works closely with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and DEP to ensure public housing residents have access to safe drinking water.

Potential sources of lead in water.

Lead can enter drinking water through the corrosion of lead-containing plumbing, including pipes that connect buildings to the City's water mains, as well as some faucets. New York City banned the installation of new lead service lines in 1961 and the use of lead soldering in plumbing systems in 1987.

Virtually all of the City's large public housing buildings are served by water service lines that are not made of lead, because of their size. But like other New York City buildings, there is a relatively small chance of lead entering tap water through the plumbing after sitting in pipes and faucets for extended periods of time.

To protect against this, DEP continuously monitors the pH of the water supply to maintain a level that is as minimally corrosive as possible and adds orthophosphate, a common food additive, which forms a protective lining on the inside of the pipes to prevent lead from leaching into the water.

Ensuring NYCHA's water quality.

Starting last month, NYCHA, in partnership with DEP and DOHMH, sampled water from 175 vacant apartments across all five boroughs, where water had been sitting in the pipes for extended periods of time. Only one sample had a lead level that was high after running the water for one minute, and subsequent tests of this sample came back negative. Additional testing has confirmed these negative findings, with all samples testing negative after running the water for one minute. Like the 100 occupied apartments that have been tested and confirmed safe over the last few years through DEP's voluntary lead testing program for NYCHA families, this additional screening has come back with the same safe results.

While we are confident in the safety of NYCHA's drinking water, there are a few simple precautions you can take to further reduce your potential exposure, including running your tap until water is cold before drinking after periods of non-use. For more information about reducing your exposure to lead, please visit the DEP's website (www.nyc.gov/dep). Residents interested in receiving a free kit from DEP can call 311 or visit the 311 website.

Please be assured that we remain committed to all public housing residents and their continued access to safe drinking water.

Sincerely,

Shola Olatoye
Chair & CEO
NYCHA

Emily Lloyd
Commissioner
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