



# State urges more schools to test water for lead, copper

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SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

**Fenway High School opened in a newly renovated building last year. Updates included replacing water pipes, and school officials said that tests of the tap water there have since shown the acceptable lead levels.**

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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State officials are calling on more public schools to sign up for funding to test water in their buildings for lead and copper amid evidence showing high levels of the contaminants at many schools.

The [Globe reported](#) Tuesday that several hundred schools across Massachusetts — a majority of those that have been tested — had at least one sample with lead levels exceeding regulatory limits.

The state launched a voluntary testing program, funded with about \$2.75 million, last spring in the wake of concerns generated by the crisis in Flint, Mich., which was rocked by very high lead levels in its municipal drinking water.

About \$600,000 in funding from the program is still available.



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The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, which has overseen the program, issued a report Tuesday saying officials want the leftover funding to be used to test the water at schools that did not participate in the program and have not done testing recently on their own.

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## High lead levels found in water at hundreds of schools

Water testing at more than 1,000 schools found that a majority had at least one sample with lead levels above regulatory limits. In some cases results were alarmingly high.

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About 818 schools — just under half of public school statewide — have participated in the program. At least 200 schools, including those in Boston, did their own testing. “As the program continues to progress, it is important that all communities take advantage of this water testing opportunity and the tools provided by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection,” Matthew Beaton, the state’s energy and environmental affairs secretary, said in a statement.

The report also recommended that the state work with public water systems to determine where opportunities exist for enhanced testing.

The [report](#) featured detailed results of the testing. (The figures differed somewhat from those reported by the Globe because the state analysis focused only on the 818 schools in the program, while the Globe included results from more than 200 other schools that performed their own tests.)





The Globe's review of results for 1,037 schools showed 605 of them had at least one sample test above the state's regulatory limit. A total of 995 schools had at least one sample with some lead.

Advocates and experts contend that even low concentrations of lead in water can be harmful, particularly for children. The tests also found high levels of copper — another potentially harmful material — at 265 schools.

Officials said that schools have taken steps to address high lead and copper levels and have notified parents of the results.

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