

BIG MOUNTAIN WATER COMPANY PWS# MT0000060

PUBLIC EDUCATION NOTICE:

DATE: 9/2/2022

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

The Big Mountain Water Company found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and children 6 years and younger. Please read this notice closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

Health Effects of Lead

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes). Lead is found in some toys, some playground equipment, and some children's metal jewelry.

Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows pipes, fittings, and fixtures with up to .25 percent weighted average of lead to be identified as "lead-free."

When water is in contact with pipes [or service lines] or plumbing that contains lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1988 are more likely to have lead pipes or lead solder.

EPA estimates that up to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

Don't forget about other sources of lead such as lead paint, lead dust, and lead in soil. Wash your children's hands and toys often as they can come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Exposure to Lead in Your Water

- 1. Run your water to flush out lead.** Run water for 15-30 seconds to flush lead from interior plumbing [Run water for 5 minutes if you have a lead service line or any lead pipes in your home plumbing] or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking, if it hasn't been used for several hours.

- 2. Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.
- 3. Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- 4. Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.** You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality.
- 5. Test your water for lead.** Call us at 406-862-1991 to find out how to get your water tested for lead. The Big Mountain Water Company follows the EPA and MT DEQ requirements for Lead and Copper monitoring. If you would like your water tested for Lead and/or Copper, you may contact Montana Environmental Labs in Kalispell at 406-755-2131.
- 6. Get your child's blood tested.** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.
- 7. Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead.** Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law previously allowed end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8 percent lead to be labeled as "lead free." As of January 4, 2014, end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, fittings and valves, must meet the new "lead-free" definition of having no more than 0.25 percent lead on a weighted average. Visit the website at <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=P100LVYK.txt> to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures and how to identify lead-free certification marks on new fixtures.

What Happened? What is Being Done?

After conducting our required testing for Lead and Copper, The Big Mountain Water Company was made aware of elevated levels of Lead in some of the sampled homes/buildings. This is **NOT** a violation but will require that the Public Utility monitors for Lead and Copper on a more frequent basis. The results were issued to the Big Mountain Water Company on 8/31/22. At this time, we are unsure as to the reason for the recent change resulting in elevated test results and we are currently investigating potential causes. We are flushing the water system and collecting more data to help us find a solution. As mentioned previously in this letter, Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows pipes, fittings, and fixtures with up to .25 percent weighted average of lead to be identified as "lead-free." When water is in contact with pipes [or service lines] or plumbing that contains lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1988 are more likely to have lead pipes or lead solder.

Moving forward, The Big Mountain Water Company will be continuing to send out Public Education notices, and per MT DEQ guidelines we will be implementing an Optimal Corrosion Control Treatment plan.

The Big Mountain Water Company service area does not have a large level of lead service lines within our system. However, there may be older homes/buildings that may still have internal plumbing fixtures that contain lead and/or galvanized fittings and pipes. If you would like to find out if you possibly have lead plumbing fixtures in your home, please contact The Big Mountain Water Company at the number listed below so that we can set up a time to visit your home.

For More Information

Call us at 406-862-1991 or visit our website at <http://bigmountainwatercompany.com/>. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead or contact your health care provider.