

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Drinking Water Section

DWS Circular Letter #2020-63

TO: Schools, Childcare Facilities, and CWSs

FROM: Lori Mathieu, Branch Chief  2020
Environmental Health & Drinking Water Sections

DATE: August 13, 2020

SUBJECT: Drinking Water Guidance for Schools and Childcare Facilities When Re-Opening After Extended Closures

When a school or childcare facility closes for an extended period (i.e., one week to several months) for holiday breaks or for the Executive Order to Stay Home and Stay Safe, the water in the building's plumbing will be stagnant and may become potentially unsafe for drinking, cleaning, cooking, or other purposes. Stagnant water in water pipes may lead to bacteria growth and plumbing corrosion which can result in growth of Legionella, or other microorganisms that can cause disease, lead and/or copper release, particulates in pipes, odor, and discolored water. In anticipation for the re-opening of schools and childcare facilities, the Department of Public Health (DPH) Drinking Water Section (DWS) wants to bring to your attention the "Return to Service" guidance and other resources that are available for schools and childcare facilities after an extended closure to ensure that drinking water is safe for consumption.

Start-up procedures when re-opening after an extended closure

For schools and childcare facilities that have not been conducting routine flushing of all water outlets to prevent water stagnation and to maintain good water quality during extended closures, DPH recommends the following to prepare the drinking water system before water is used after re-opening.

1. Contact your water utility (i.e. water provider to the building) or your water operator about local water quality and to coordinate maintenance activities.
2. Contact your local health department for any local requirements for reopening.
3. Follow the steps described in the DPH "[Return to Service](#)" guidance.



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4. Test the water minimally for total coliform bacteria after flushing to ensure that the water quality is safe for consumption. Additionally, special purpose samples for lead, copper and/or legionella may be collected if you suspect any issues.

Public Water Systems

For schools and childcare facilities that are their own public water systems (PWS) (i.e. served by an onsite well), additional start-up procedures, such as disinfecting the entire water system may be required if the PWS does not already maintain a chemical disinfection system and therefore need to coordinate the reopening with your water certified operator.

Please be aware that DPH is not waiving any drinking water regulatory requirements for PWS to ensure that public health is protected. PWS that are fully closed and water is not available for public consumption should notify the DWS at DWDcompliance@ct.gov of the date which the PWS closed and when you plan to resume operation.

Resources

- [COVID-19 Resources for Building with Low or No Flow](https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Drinking-Water/COVID-19/COVID-19---Information-for-Public-Water-Systems)
<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Drinking-Water/COVID-19/COVID-19---Information-for-Public-Water-Systems>
- [EPA's 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Child Care Facilities](https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit)
<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit>
- [EPA's 3Ts Flushing Best Practices](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-09/documents/flushing_best_practices_factsheet_508.pdf)
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-09/documents/flushing_best_practices_factsheet_508.pdf
- [Be Lead Safe – Clean Your Aerators](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/drinking_water/pdf/Be-Lead-Safe-Clean-your-aerators.pdf)
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/drinking_water/pdf/Be-Lead-Safe-Clean-your-aerators.pdf

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