

LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

Many of you have read the issues with lead contamination in drinking water in Flint, Michigan. Obvious questions arise in your mind as to how much lead is in the water you receive from Breezy Hill. First, your water meets all requirements for lead in drinking water. Lead is a contaminant we actually test for in your home – generally from your kitchen faucet. Lead is a naturally occurring element which can leach into groundwater, it was common in paint until 1978, ‘leaded gasoline’ until 1996, and was used in pipe until as late as 1986. Small percentages were used in brass that was commonly used in plumbing fixtures and fittings. Lead ingested into the body from any source can be extremely toxic and dangerous especially to children below the age of 6.

Because of the dangers of lead in drinking water, new rules (laws) were passed in the early 1990’s requiring public water supplies to test for lead in drinking water inside of homes – previously all tests were done at the water meter, the end of the utilities’ jurisdiction. The selection of the homes was based on three different scenarios:

Tier 1 Sites – Homes with known lead piping or with copper plumbing installed between 1982 and 1986. Homes with copper plumbing prior to the ban on lead solder run a risk of higher lead levels from lead leaching from the lead solder and those homes with the “newest plumbing” before the ban in 1987 would be at highest risk.

Tier 2 Sites – Commercial sites falling under the provisions of Tier 1 sites

Tier 3 Sites – Homes with copper plumbing with lead solder installed prior to 1982. These sites were not considered as much at risk as the Tier 1 sites as the solder in contact with the potable water had probably leached out over the years.

When the rule was established, the utility was required to analyze its data to determine sites most at risk. First, because Breezy Hill was not established until 1968, lead piping was never used. We then had to determine which homes may have copper pipe with lead solder. Breezy Hill did this by looking at the records when the initial water tap was installed and then asking the homeowner if copper pipe was used in the construction. If the answer was positive, it was placed on the list until the most vulnerable 60 sites (number of sites required under the law) were determined.

Initial monitoring was begun and continues to this date, although we are on a reduced monitoring basis as we have not had a problem with lead levels. Lead cannot be totally

removed from drinking water since it is naturally occurring. However, if the level exceeds **15 parts per billion**, actions have to be taken by the utility to attempt to reduce lead exposure to the public. **Our current average for lead is 2 parts per billion** based on samples pulled in 2013. We are required to pull these samples every 3 years since our level is so low. We began pulling samples again in April 2016 to insure the water remains well within compliance levels for this complex law. Those results are not back from the lab yet.

One of the stories coming out of the Flint Mi incident is that the City did not have corrosion control measures. This is adding chemicals (generally ortho-phosphates) to the water to form a coating on pipes to prevent lead from leaching. Other chemicals that can be used are lime and sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) as well as a host of others. Breezy Hill uses the ortho-phosphate, lime and bicarbonate in water supplies to insure that we have corrosion control in place. These measures are to protect residential plumbing as Breezy Hill has no lead pipe in our facilities. This measure would protect our customers that may have lead pipes or fixtures in their homes that we are unaware of.

The issue of lead is a complex subject. We have prepared this to let you know what we are doing at Breezy Hill to insure the safest quality water we can deliver to you.

