

## Flint Michigan Water Crisis - Lead and Drinking Water

In the light of the Flint water crisis last year, we obviously have a heightened awareness of corrosion prevention for lead (or any other metal) piping in our drinking water distribution system.

We should all be aware that lead is not in the water itself as it leaves the water treatment plant. Lead is found throughout this country in water pipes, connections and in fixtures produced and sold prior to 2014.

Responsible water systems, including Oregon, use an additive in the treatment process that coats the inside of our lines and fixtures to protect the water from leaching metals and end up in our drinking water. Oregon has been using a polyphosphate to successfully do this for many years. This additive ensures that our water is not corrosive and that any lead that might be in the consumer's system or fixtures will remain separated from the water. Operators at the treatment plant also check the water for stability (or corrosiveness) at a minimum of twice weekly as an additional check.

All residents must be aware that water faucets or other fixtures purchased in this country up until 2014 frequently contained lead in their construction. Our additives protect our residents from that lead, **but only if the fixtures are being used and water is routinely running through them in order for the coating to properly work.**

As an example of how this can work, we recently collected a series of tests throughout Oregon's school system. We found no lead results that exceeded the action level of 15 parts per billion, except in a place where a sink that was almost never used, and when used, is not for consumption or food preparation. We deliberately tested that sink to demonstrate the impact that not using a fixture can have on the protective coating process. Oregon Schools has committed to replacing any fixture with even the slightest detect of lead which includes this sink, prior to the start of the next school year.

The important message for our consumers is that you must use your fixtures in order to make sure that the coating can work. Positive lead tests could result when a fixture remains unused for a long period of time. Any positive lead sample will almost invariably result from lead contained in the fixtures within a home or facility rather than in the water system itself.