



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: W. D. Rowlands via C. Marten

DATE: March 22, 2017

SUBJECT: DRINKING WATER AT EMERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAMPUS

The Emerson campus of Emerson-Bandini Elementary School hosts both the district school and a co-located charter, San Diego Cooperative 2. On January 26, 2017, the charter school reported a problem with water in one of the classrooms. The water from the classroom sink was provided to a therapy dog. The dog would not drink, and the teacher reported seeing a sheen on the water that was similar to a sheen that can be seen when oil is on the surface of water. The concern was communicated to PPO and ultimately the district Safety Office. The district proceeded with an abundance of caution, securing the drinking water across both schools, investigating and testing the water supply. Multiple bottled water dispensers and cups were provided to the schools.

The district sampled numerous water outlets on the site, testing for bacteria and petroleum-based contaminants. Unfortunately, the initial testing revealed levels of a contaminant that exceed the state's allowable threshold. The sample with the high reading was from the classroom where the water quality complaint originated. The district entered into discussions with a consultant and the city to determine next steps. Additional testing was conducted to find the source and location of the contamination. Preliminary results from the city indicated similar contamination. The contamination appears to be isolated to the portable classrooms that house the charter school on the campus. However, as a conservative approach, drinking water for both schools remains secured, and bottled water is still being provided. Additionally, we have confirmed with the consultant that the water on campus is acceptable to continue to use for hand washing. No cooking or meal preparation occurs on campus as the food is provided from a nearby food service production kitchen.

The contaminant in question is possibly a result of degradation of older plastic plumbing materials. Based on an initial analysis of the plumbing on the site, a potential source of the contamination was the flexible lines leading from the wall to the plumbing fixture. Although, we initially believed the portables were connected to one water supply, further investigation on March 6 revealed that some of the portables may be receiving water from a different supply line. This line is reported to be PVC pipe, which is a common source of the identified contaminant. This line was removed from supplying water to the portables and another round of water testing was initiated. The combination of these actions, replacing the flexible lines, and no longer drawing water supplied through PVC pipe, remedied the situation. Follow-up testing revealed no further contamination.

March 22, 2017

Lead contamination is unrelated to the above issue however, district staff believed it would be prudent to also test for lead while pursuing the other drinking water issues at this site.

Under the new program initiated by the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water to have all community water providers, e.g., City of San Diego, test for lead in drinking water at K-12 schools, the Emerson campus became the first site for lead testing by the city.

Unfortunately, results show three of 10 samples from the site with higher than allowable levels of lead. The district will work with the city to perform further testing, to determine the source of the lead, and to determine the best course of action to remedy the situation.

The Emerson campus will remain on bottled drinking water until the lead contamination is resolved. We anticipate this will not be before the end of March, and may extend longer depending upon the facility repairs needed.

WDR:

c: C. Ward
A. Sharp
A. Donovan