



CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH UNIT

VINCENT W. HERRIGAN  
*County Executive*

CHRISTINE SCHUYLER  
*Director of Health & Human Services*  
*(Commissioner of Social Services/Public Health Director)*

## Pine Valley Elementary School Health Notice – December 10, 2015

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

Pine Valley Central School (water supply ID number NY0615959) found elevated levels of copper in drinking water samples collected from some locations in the Elementary School and certain individuals may be sensitive to it.

#### What Was Found?

Ten water samples were collected from the Elementary School for copper testing on August 29, 2015. Four of these samples exceeded the "action level" for copper in drinking water set by the NYSDOH. The action level is exceeded if copper levels in more than 10 percent of the water samples is greater than 1.3 milligrams per liter (mg/l or parts per million). The 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of sample results is used to determine compliance for copper. The 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of samples collected from the Elementary School was 1.6 mg/l, which exceeded the action level of 1.3 mg/l. Similar copper testing done at the High School showed no problem.

#### What Is The Source Of The Copper?

Copper occurs naturally in food, rock, soil, water and sediment and is widely used in manufacturing. The source of copper in the Elementary School is the copper pipes in the building not the wells. When water sits idle in copper pipes for long periods of time it can dissolve small amounts of copper. NYSDOH requires that water samples for copper be "first draw" samples which are collected after the water has sat in pipes overnight to test worst case conditions.

#### What Are The Health Effects of Copper?

Copper is an essential nutrient for humans and necessary in our diet to ensure good health. However, too much copper can cause vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, and nausea. Some people who drink water containing high levels of copper over many years could suffer liver or kidney damage. Children under one year old and people with Wilson's disease are more vulnerable to the effects of copper and should exercise particular care to limit exposure.

#### Steps You Can Take To Reduce Exposure to Copper In Drinking Water

1. **Run the water to flush out copper.** Run water for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking.
2. **Use cold water only for cooking and drinking.** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; copper dissolves more easily into hot water.
3. **Do not boil water to remove copper.** Boiling water will not reduce copper.

#### What Is Being Done To Reduce Copper Levels In the Water?

The water is being treated with an orthophosphate solution, which is used to build up a protective coating inside water pipes and prevent copper from being dissolved. Recent changes were made to this treatment process to make it more effective. In addition, more sampling is being done to monitor copper levels.

**For More Information** contact the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services at 716-753-4481 or by email at [cchealth@co.chautauqua.ny.us](mailto:cchealth@co.chautauqua.ny.us) or the NYSDOH at 1 800-458-1158 or by email at [bpwsp@health.state.ny.us](mailto:bpwsp@health.state.ny.us) or call the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1 800-426-4791. The School will provide you with updates after receiving new sample results.