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# L C A S t a t e m e n t

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**RE:** LCA Water Supply Meets Health Standards for Lead Exposure

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Concerns about the safety of Lehigh County Authority's water have been raised recently as a result of the water crisis in Flint, Mich.

Today, an article posted widely on social media outlets reported that children in Allentown have the highest levels of lead in their blood as compared to 17 other cities in Pennsylvania, and significantly higher than the levels reported in children in Flint.

LCA cannot confirm the source of data for this article. However, it is important to note that the article doesn't seek to research the source of these high lead high levels in Allentown, instead reporting only that "the primary source for childhood lead poisoning in Pennsylvania is exposure to aging, deteriorating lead-based paint (chips and dust)."

Drinking water can contribute to lead exposure as water passes through lead pipes, brass plumbing fixtures, and other plumbing configurations that use lead solder. LCA takes important steps to ensure this risk is minimized for all customers, and routine monitoring shows that LCA's water meets federal and state health standards for acceptable levels of lead exposure.

An important aspect of LCA's water supply is the natural "hardness" of the water. Hard water is found throughout Lehigh County and contains high levels of naturally occurring – and healthful – minerals such as calcium and magnesium. These minerals are often the source of complaints from customers who dislike the white residue that can build up on plumbing fixtures. Calcium deposits inside your plumbing, however, is great protection against lead exposure because the calcium coating on the inside of the pipes can prevent direct exposure of the water to the pipe lining.

In addition, at its water treatment plant in Allentown as well as at other water supply sites throughout the service area, LCA treats its water with small doses of sodium

hydroxide to adjust the pH of the water slightly, which serves to further prevent corrosion of lead and copper from plumbing fixtures into the drinking water.

LCA also follows all required testing procedures to ensure that lead exposure falls within acceptable standards as defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. This testing procedure includes identifying homes that are considered to be representative of our customer base, including some with lead service lines, and drawing water samples after a minimum 6-hour stagnation period, otherwise known as a “first draw” sample. That means that the water must have sat within the home’s plumbing system for a minimum of 6 hours without any water being used (such as overnight), so that the water has as much time as possible to sit within the copper or lead plumbing fixtures prior to being tested.

LCA’s water has routinely passed the test for acceptable levels of lead exposure.

However, some customers do face a higher risk of lead exposure depending on the plumbing materials inside their home (brass fixtures and lead solder). Some customers who have water softeners installed may be adjusting the chemistry of their own tap water, which can result in different levels of lead leaching, if the home has any lead in its plumbing.

Some homes built more than 40 years ago may have their water delivered through a lead service line. While LCA replaces its portion of lead service lines routinely during main replacement projects and other work in older communities where lead lines may exist, homeowners are responsible for replacing service lines and any internal plumbing fixtures.

None of LCA’s approximately 600 miles of water mains are made of lead.

LCA encourages all customers to become informed about the risk of exposure to lead for their children. As LCA is making every effort to reduce potential exposure through drinking water, the Pennsylvania Department of Health reports that the leading source of lead exposure in children is lead-based paint. The Department’s website says:

*“The leading cause of lead poisoning is lead dust from lead-based paint, which was used in many homes until 1978. Young children are exposed to lead dust in older homes through normal everyday activities such as crawling on the floor and putting their hands, toys or other objects in their mouths. Lead can also be found in some imported spices, home remedies and cosmetics.”*

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/lead\\_poisoning\\_prevention\\_control/14175](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/lead_poisoning_prevention_control/14175))

Customers with questions about lead in their drinking water are encouraged to contact LCA directly. Some additional resources are linked below:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>

<http://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-and-copper-rule>

<http://extension.psu.edu/natural-resources/water/drinking-water/water-testing/pollutants/lead-in-drinking-water>

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**Media Note:** the article that has been sent to LCA multiple times by concerned customers today is located here: <http://www.vox.com/2016/2/3/10904120/lead-exposure-flint-pennsylvania>