

Wilkinsburg Penn Joint Water Authority
Board Meeting
September 28, 2021

Good evening Board of Directors and Authority Staff,

My name is Talor Musil and I am the Health Policy Manager at Women for a Healthy Environment, a nonprofit that focuses on environmental exposures that impact public health. Since 2009, our organization has been focused on preventing lead poisoning through community programming, technical assistance and advocacy. A large portion of our work takes place in the Wilkinsburg Penn Joint Water Authority service area. I am here today to reiterate the science and community concerns related to lead in drinking water that have been shared with you before, in hopes that you will consider them more seriously today.

Lead is a naturally occurring heavy metal that leaches from pipes, solder, and fixtures into drinking water. Exposure to this neurotoxin is 100% preventable through the intermediate use of corrosion control treatments and the long-term replacement of any leaded plumbing from plant-to-tap. The impacts of lead exposure are 100% irreversible and last a lifetime: developmental and cognitive delays as well as kidney damage are among the most common effects. The American Academy of Pediatrics indicates there is no safe amount of lead from any source, including water.

Right now, Allegheny County children are tested at ages 1 and 2 for lead in their blood. These tests identified **2,538** new cases of childhood lead poisoning between 2015 and 2020. This screening strategy is effective at capturing exposure from **all** sources of lead due to its tendency to bioaccumulate in the body. This means that elevated levels of lead in the blood typically indicate a combination of exposure sources over time. All prevention matters, but prevention at children's earliest stages of development – when they may be exposed to tap water in utero and later through formula – is most critical. For these reasons, utilizing EBL data to guide the investment of PennVest LSL replacement dollars into communities with the highest rates of poisoning will be an effective approach to reduce lead poisoning in the WPJWA service area.

I would also like to make the strong recommendation to immediately cease all partial lead service line replacements under any circumstance (e.g. repairs and capital-funded lead line replacements). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and many studies deem this practice ineffective at preventing lead exposure and find that they can increase (in the short- and long-term) the lead in water levels. This is extremely concerning as an Authority with increasing lead in water levels and whose service area contains 7 communities in the top 10% most impacted by lead poisoning in the County.

I implore you to hear [your ratepayers' concerns delivered to you today](#) and collaborate with community, academic, technical, and political partners who have been eager to support the Authority in improving its lead prevention strategies through the creation of a Community Lead Response Advisory Committee.

Talor Musil
Health Policy Manager
Women for a Healthy Environment

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