

Arsenic found in water at Seattle schools

May 2 2006

Bottled water is being distributed to all Seattle public schools after tests found arsenic in drinking fountain water at five elementary schools.

Superintendent Raj Manhas pledged to test every source of drinking water in the district and provide bottled water to every school until the cause of the arsenic contamination is discovered and repairs can be completed, The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported Tuesday.

All the contaminated water came from drinking fountains or combination sink/faucet fixtures that had been repaired or replaced recently as part of the district's efforts to reduce the levels of lead in drinking water, the newspaper said.

Seattle Public Utilities officials said the arsenic was most likely coming from inside the schools since the city's water supply is routinely monitored and has shown only trace amounts of arsenic, well below levels of concern.

Arsenic can be lethal at high doses, while low level exposure can cause serious health problems, including increased cancer risk.

School district officials said they don't believe children were exposed to the water with arsenic -- at least not enough to affect their health, The Seattle Times reported.

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