



## City of Durham Durham County

### Joint News Release

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#### News Media Contacts:

Kirk Butts  
Sr. Public Affairs Specialist, Water Management  
(919) 560-4381, ext. 35255  
[Kirk.Butts@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Kirk.Butts@DurhamNC.gov)

Khali Gallman  
Info. & Communications Specialist, DCoDPH  
(919) 560-7226  
[kgallman@dconc.gov](mailto:kgallman@dconc.gov)



## Durham City and County Mark National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

### *Organizations Share Tips for Keeping Homes, Families Safe & Lead-Free*

DURHAM, N.C. – October 23-29 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, and the City of Durham Department of Water Management has partnered with Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH) to help raise awareness about this important annual observance.

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week focuses on the many ways parents can reduce children's exposure to lead in their environment and prevent its serious health effects. This year, a special focus on lead in drinking water has been added, along with the slogan: "Lead Free Kids for a Healthy Future."

Water Management provides clean drinking water daily to hundreds of thousands of customers and visitors in the City of Durham and Durham County. The department tests regularly for lead and more than 150 other contaminants, and maintains 100% compliance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"Protecting public health is at the heart of our mission to consistently provide the highest quality drinking water to our customers," said Don Greeley, Department of Water Management Director. "In the case of lead poisoning prevention, there is no lead in the water leaving the City's treatment plants, and we take the extra step of adding a very effective corrosion control chemical to the water to help prevent leaching of lead from customer plumbing."

Older homes have a higher risk of lead exposure, due to the materials used in their plumbing. Homes built before 1930 are likely to have lead pipes, and homes constructed prior to 1986 often have copper piping with lead solder.

Families can significantly reduce their risk of lead exposure by following these simple tap water tips:

- If a faucet has gone unused overnight or for a period of six hours or more, flush it by running cold water for at least a minute. As an added conservation effort, capture some of that flushed water in the sink or a bucket and use it to water plants, wash dishes, etc.
- Never cook with or drink water from the hot faucet tap. Instead, draw cold water from the tap and heat it on the stove or microwave.
- Never use hot tap water to make baby formula or cereal.
- Periodically remove faucet strainers/aerators from taps and rinse them out. While they are off, run faucets with cold water for three to five minutes.

Durham County's Environmental Health Division has a long history of following the State program for lead poisoning prevention in facilities under inspection. Lead exposure poses a particular health risk to children, and pregnant and nursing women, and paint containing lead is the most common source of lead exposure and poisoning for children today. Environmental Health provides residential environmental investigations when a child under six years of age has been identified with an elevated blood lead level or when referrals are made by doctor's offices or other agencies. DCoDPH works with Water Management if lead above the action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) is identified in water through routine testing. "Although significant progress has been made to reduce childhood lead poisoning over the years, we remain diligent in our approach to raise awareness about how to prevent lead poisoning," said Warren Richardson, Regional Environmental Health Specialist with DCoDPH.

Children younger than six are eligible for a free blood lead screening by DCoDPH. Please contact the department at 919-560-7600 to arrange a test.

Water Management customers who own homes built before 1986, and who are concerned about possible lead in their home's plumbing, may request to have their water tested for lead. To request a free sample kit, contact Durham One Call at 919-560-1200.

For more information about the City's lead testing and prevention, visit <http://durhamnc.gov/1156/Lead-in-Drinking-Water> or call 919-560-4381. Durham County Environmental Health can be contacted by email at [healthinspector@dconc.gov](mailto:healthinspector@dconc.gov) or 919-560-7800. Additional information can be found on the EPA's web site at <https://www.epa.gov/lead/lead-poisoning-prevention-week-2016>.

### **About the Department of Water Management**

The Department of Water Management is responsible for the operation and maintenance of Durham's water supply, water treatment and water reclamation (wastewater treatment) facilities, the collection and distribution systems (including meter reading), and customer billing services. The department has a wide variety of support divisions and programs to maintain the existing infrastructure that provide these integral services, and strives to be a responsible steward of the City's physical assets. For information, visit <http://durhamnc.gov/944/>, like [Durham Saves Water](#) on Facebook, and follow [@DurhamWater](#) on Twitter.

### **About the Durham County Department of Public Health**

Established in 1855, the Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH) is committed to providing leadership and education for patients and the community-at-large. DCoDPH offers immunizations, health education and counseling, environmental health testing and inspections, refugee health, women's health, and HIV/STD prevention and diagnosis. With diverse programs and initiatives, DCoDPH is dedicated to the belief that every citizen deserves to be treated with respect, dignity, and quality, irrespective of race, religion, economic status, age, gender, national origin, disability, sexual preference, health status, or ability to pay. For more information, visit <http://dconc.gov/government/departments-f-z/public-health>, follow @DurhamHealthNC on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, or sign up for our monthly newsletter, [Community Connections](#).