

Cornell University

## Water Filtration Plant

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In response to recent questions from customers arising from the publicity of the lead contamination issue in the potable water of Flint, MI, and more recent reports of the lead in drinking water at local Ithaca schools, I'd like to provide information as it relates to the Cornell University Water System.

The Cornell University Water System receives its water from Fall Creek, treats the water with a conventional water treatment plant, and delivers the treated water to campus, to the Hamlet of Forest Home, and to the Cornell Heights neighborhood of the City of Ithaca. From time to time, Cornell Water also serves Collegetown and the surrounding neighborhood when the City of Ithaca is performing maintenance on its system or when the city requires water due to construction activities at the City of Ithaca water treatment facility.

The Cornell University Water System adheres to the Federal Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) as part of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The LCR requires Cornell University to conduct periodic lead and copper monitoring and to publish a sampling summary as part of the Annual Water Quality Report. Testing is conducted every three years.

Sampling was last completed in 2014. At that time 30 representative samples from strategically chosen sites throughout our system were obtained and analyzed for lead and copper. Our compliance values are well below the action levels of 0.015 mg/L for Lead (Pb) and 1.3 mg/L for Copper (Cu) established by the LCR. Results are reported to the New York State Department of Health and also listed in our [Annual Water Quality Report](#). In fact, the last round of analytical results for the Cornell Water System showed non-detectable levels of lead in 27 out of 30 samples. The highest reading was 0.0042 mg/L.

We have created a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) sheet (below), which I invite you to read.

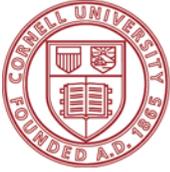
In summary, the Cornell University Water System provides water of the highest quality and has no issue with lead in its drinking water.

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Useful information from EPA:

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



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## **Frequently Asked Questions Pertaining to Lead in Drinking Water**

**Where can I find general information about lead in drinking water?** The EPA has an excellent site for information relating to how lead can enter a drinking water supply, the health effects, and the rules and regulations drinking water purveyors must follow to keep lead at the lowest levels possible.

<http://www.epa.gov/your-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>

**How does Cornell monitor for lead in its drinking water?** Mandated by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR), Cornell University has a Lead and Copper monitoring program. The number of samples, the frequency of sampling, and the sample locations are all dictated by the LCR via the regulatory authorities. Because of our historically low results, we are on a reduced monitoring frequency of sampling every three years. Our next round of sampling is scheduled for 2017.

**What is the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of lead in a public water supply?** The federal LCR defines the maximum contaminant level for lead in public drinking water as an Action Level. The Action Level is 15 micrograms per liter, ug/L, or parts per billion. To be in compliance, 90% of the samples analyzed must be less than the Action Level. If an Action Level is exceeded by the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile result, the public water supply must take steps to reduce the amount of lead in the water.

**What are the levels of lead in Cornell's water supply?** The Annual Water Quality Report (AWQR) issued each year lists the latest round of analyses. I invite you to read this comprehensive report, found on Cornell Utilities' website. [https://energyandsustainability.fs.cornell.edu/file/AWQR\\_2015%20final.pdf](https://energyandsustainability.fs.cornell.edu/file/AWQR_2015%20final.pdf) Cornell's water is in compliance with this regulation. In fact, 27 out of 30 of Cornell's last round of sampling results showed no detectable lead. The highest result was 4.2 ug/L.

**How do I read the lead values in the AWQR?** We are required to indicate the range of our sampling results in parentheses and the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile result in our AWQR. You will see in the 2015 report that the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile reading was 0.001 mg/L. The range of our results was Non-Detect to 0.0042 mg/L.

**What does Cornell do to protect its water system from lead?** At the Cornell Water Filtration Plant, a corrosion inhibitor is added at a small dose of 2 mg/L. The corrosion inhibitor, called Zinc Orthophosphate, creates a protective layer on the piping and plumbing systems and prevents any lead that could possibly be in plumbing fixtures from leaching into the water. This corrosion inhibitor also prevents copper from leaching into the water.

**How do I know if my building is served by Cornell Water?** Most of the main Cornell campus is served by Cornell's water system. Cornell also serves a portion of Forest Home and the Cornell Heights neighborhood of the City of Ithaca. The City of Ithaca and the Bolton Point water systems serve some of the outlying buildings. If you have questions about the specific service to your building, you may inquire by writing to [water@cornell.edu](mailto:water@cornell.edu).

**Is Cornell Water safe? YES!**

*Christopher L. Bordlemay*

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