Sugarloaf Water Association
Serving Sugarloafers Since 1955

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Dear Valued Customer,

The information below will provide you with our lead education material as part of our Annual, State and federally mandated, lead education campaign. Sugarloaf Water Association has found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

First I would like to let you know that the source water here at Sugarloaf does not contain lead and is safe to drink. The high lead concentrations found during testing were from three out of twenty single-family or multi-family structures with copper pipes with lead solder installed after 1982. Under the EPA water regulation for lead and copper these three homes contained lead levels exceeding 0.015 mg/L. These results triggered our annual lead education campaign for all water system residence, and must include the enclosed Alert, and EPA mandatory language for all water systems.

The Water Association was initially mandated to test twenty (Tier 1) sites starting in 1991. The total number of homes in the association that might show elevated Lead levels is still unknown. These mandated sites do not change, other than a reduction in sites down to ten with what is called reduced monitoring. The source of the lead is generally in the private home’s plumbing. Depending on water chemistry lead can leach out of fixtures and solder. The Water Association cannot control plumbing practices, and the selection of fixtures. Buying the more expensive fixtures does not guarantee lower lead levels. Homes that have their electrical panel grounded to the water pipe may also increase corrosion, causing elevated lead levels. That was a standard practice years ago. Newly constructed homes may also have elevated levels of both lead and copper unless they used plastic piping in the new construction. The reintroduction of this education material now is due to mandated testing of twenty lead and copper sites when a new water source is brought online as was the case this past December.

The water supply is eight drilled bedrock wells and the Carrabassett River and they have not tested positive for lead, it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies. Secondly SWA does not have any lead service lines in its distribution system. The old service lines are copper and all newer (1995+) water lines installed under Sugarloaf water association are HDPE (polyethylene) as per our standards.

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Because the lead at the above sampling sites have remained over the action levels of 0.015 mg/L, Sugarloaf Water Association has contracted Dirigo Engineering to update our corrosion control treatment plan.

Sugarloaf Water Association recommends that in all homes, new and old, you run the tap water for 15 to 30 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water has gone unused for more than a few hours. Use cold water for drinking and cooking, as well as for preparing baby formula. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold water. Boiling the water does not reduce lead levels. For those homes affected consider using bottled water. If you are concerned about lead, contact your health care provider or call Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (866-292-3474). You can ask about having your child tested for lead.
The water must sit for a minimum of six hours in the pipes and the sample is first draw. Some plumbing materials including solder and brass fixtures may contain lead. If you want to make changes to your plumbing, it is important to know that "lead-free" materials are allowed to have up to 0.2% lead (solder) or up to 0.25% lead (piping/fixtures). Older products (fixtures/piping) labelled "lead-free" could contain up to 8% lead.

You can also test your water for lead; it costs about $30.00 depending on what lab you select. If you have any questions regarding this lead education material, our corrosion control treatment plans or the possibility of lead in your homes water, please contact The Sugarloaf Water Association at our main office number or e-mail. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at http://www.epa.gov/lead, or contact your health care provider.

Sincerely,

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