



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia

Public Affairs

Media Statement

23 March 2007

Update on health response to lead issue in Esperance

Blood test results from Esperance residents continue to show lead at levels that do not raise health concerns.

Of the 166 results from the community tested so far, 164 have been below the World Health Organization guideline of 10 micrograms per decilitre, with two borderline results of 10 and 11.

This is in addition to the 84 port workers tested last week who showed levels well below the current WA occupational health and safety guidelines.

Director of Environmental Health Jim Dodds said both of the borderline cases were older adults and while the levels did not cause any concern, they would be contacted individually to determine how they might have been exposed.

“While overall these results are reassuring, we are still advising pregnant women and young children to be tested,” he said.

“From next Monday we will have additional staff in the Esperance Hospital lead testing clinic to ensure all people who want testing have access to the service,” he said.

The clinic is open from 8am to 4pm weekdays and members of the public can call 9071 0891 to make an appointment.

A community health nurse is also available at the clinic to provide general health advice.

Alternatively, people can visit their GP and use the normal blood testing service offered by the Esperance Hospital.

Mr Dodds said recent rainwater tank results had shown that some samples exceeded the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead and nickel.

“So far we have tested 134 rainwater samples with 31 exceeding the guidelines for lead and 58 have been over the guidelines for nickel,” he said.

“These residents are being contacted immediately to discuss the appropriate action,” he said.

The DOH advises residents not to drink water from rainwater tanks until they have been tested and people should contact the Shire on 9071 0666 to arrange this.

Mr Dodds said the Department would also review environmental monitoring results obtained by the Department of Environment and Conservation and would continue its investigations to determine what actions, if any, are necessary to protect public health.

Mr Dodds will be available to answer questions from residents at the public lead forum being held at the Esperance Civic Centre on Monday 26 March at 7pm.

Results from the testing still underway will be available at an information day to be held on Saturday 14 April. Details will be advertised closer to the time.

For more information visit www.health.wa.gov.au/envirohealth or call HealthDirect on 1800 022 222.

Media contact: (08) 9489 2888