



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14, 2021

Rowan County Approves Plan to Provide Water Pitchers and Testing Kits to Northeast Water System Customers

Effort to provide short-term solution to Salisbury-Rowan Utilities' discovery of elevated lead levels in four (4) out of twenty (20) homes tested;

Free Brita pitchers to be mailed to fully protect public health as a long-term solution is determined;

County continues its work on long-term solution with State of North Carolina and Virginia Tech University experts;

\$72.00 bill credit offered for NEWS customers who take part in the water testing program.

SALISBURY, NC January 14, 2021: Last summer, Rowan County and Salisbury-Rowan Utilities (SRU) notified customers served by the Northeast Water System that elevated levels of lead had been found in drinking water in four (4) out of twenty (20) homes tested in the service area. The source of lead is limited to privately owned materials as determined by knowledge of the distribution system materials and inspections completed on two (2) of the four (4) homes exceeding the action level. Household plumbing materials and service lines containing lead are often found in homes built before 1986, as well as homes with faucets, valves, and components made of brass.

In June of 2020, Rowan County offered free, voluntary lead and copper testing and held two community meetings – over Zoom due to COVID – to inform the public and answer questions on lead in drinking water. Few responses were received from the letter, and the community meetings were sparsely attended. As a result, only a handful of homes participated in the voluntary lead and copper testing effort.

In the interest of fully protecting public health as Rowan County's work with the State of North Carolina and Virginia Tech University continues to determine the best, long-term solution, the Rowan County Board of Commissioners today approved a plan to provide every active connection on the NEWS system with a free Brita pitcher with two certified filters. Barring mail delays, pitchers should arrive at customers' homes or buildings no later than February 15, 2021.

The certified filters provided may last up to six months. Customers will initially receive two filters. If the filters need replacement more often than every six months, customers will be instructed with information on whom to contact to receive additional filters.

Along with the Brita pitcher and certified filters, every active connection on the NEWS system will also receive a free lead and copper water sampling kit so customers can voluntarily take and return water samples for lead and copper tests. The testing kits and Brita pitcher filters may be mailed separately to each customer.

A certified laboratory will conduct the lead and copper tests and the results will be shared with the customers. Included in the testing kits will be pre-paid delivery packets so customers can return their samples FREE of charge.

The testing program is the best way to ensure we choose the correct long-term solution that will reduce the levels of lead for years to come. To thank our customers for their help, Rowan County is offering a \$72.00 credit on their water bill if they return a water sample following the enclosed instructions and using the pre-paid delivery packet.

Rowan County is taking these precautionary steps because lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Customers can reduce their consumption of lead by doing the following:

- Have water tested. Take part in our FREE testing program.
- Let cold water run at the faucet for at least three minutes before using it for drinking or cooking.
- Use only cold water. Hot water has the potential to absorb more lead from the piping. Heating or boiling water does NOT remove lead from drinking water.
- Regularly clean faucet aerators. Lead particles can collect in aerators.
- Properly use the Brita water pitcher and certified filter provided by Rowan County.

For more information on our Brita pitcher distribution, our Lead and Copper testing program, and other information about the current situation, we invite our customers to visit our website at www.rowancountync.gov/water.

“We thank our customers on the NEWS system for their patience as we continue to work toward a permanent solution that is in the best interest of public health,” said Rowan County Manager Aaron Church. “We need our customers assistance by participating in our testing program. This will assist in determining the best long-term solution.”

For additional information please contact County Manager Aaron Church at 704-216-8180

#