

What does it Cost to Remove Lead from Drinking Water in Schools?

Greene Economics partnered with EHS International (EHSI) and PS2 engineering to estimate the total costs required to remediate lead in drinking water in all school districts in Washington State. The work was conducted for the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) upon request from the state legislature. Estimates were based on several data sources including testing for lead in water in schools conducted by the Department of Health during the years 2018 through 2021, independent engineering cost data, information from school district building coordinators, and data from OSPI.

Greene Economics recently provided the Washington State legislature with an estimate of the total cost to remediate and mitigate lead-contaminated water fixtures at schools throughout Washington State.

The research team analyzed data from 162 school districts of all sizes, consisting of over 31,000 samples. The study focused on four districts from each of three size categories (large, medium, and small) to represent a variety of schools within Washington State. These school districts were evaluated for the anticipated cost of testing potable water fixtures, replacing fixtures, and re-testing fixtures having lead levels greater than five parts per billion (5 ppb). An estimate for the total cost for the state was developed



using the data from the 12 districts to extrapolate to the total costs for all 295 school districts in the state. Greene Economics calculated the average cost per district size category and scaled these by building area to adjust from the sample set of districts to a state average by size category. This approach takes these averages for each size of district and multiplies the average cost per district category by the number of districts in the state for that category. The average cost for large schools is estimated at \$517,736

for a full round of testing and remediating, which will happen every five years. For medium sized schools, the estimate is \$225,300, and for small school districts the estimate is \$47,670. The total cost estimate for the state using this approach is \$48.4 million. This represents the best estimate of costs for each five-year cycle of testing and remediation by replacement of failed fixtures. Greene Economics' research provided OSPI with a detailed analysis of the costs of remediating and mitigating the water fixtures under the program in their final report alongside tables such this summary table below.

Category	Number of Districts	Average Cost Per District	Total Cost
Large Districts	58	\$517,736	\$30,028,705
Medium Districts	40	\$225,300	\$9,012,014
Small Districts	197	\$47,670	\$9,391,028
TOTAL			\$48,431,747