



**#056-21**

**Commonwealth of Virginia**  
**Virginia Department of Education**  
Superintendent's Memo #056-21

DATE: March 5, 2021  
TO: Division Superintendents  
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction  
SUBJECT: **Water System Restart for Schools**

On February 5, 2021, Governor Northam called on all school divisions in the Commonwealth to make in-person learning options available by March 15, 2021, in accordance with the [health guidance](#) the Northam Administration put forward in January and [new research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Recognizing significant learning losses over the past year, Governor Northam also encouraged school divisions to offer classroom instruction during the summer months to further increase in-person instructional opportunities for students.

In preparation of the in-person learning, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) encourages all schools to review their building systems maintenance protocols as well as the buildings' water systems to ensure that these systems are clean and are in good working order to ensure that students and staff come back to school buildings that will offer a safe and healthy learning environment.

It is recommended that special attention be paid to the water management system to prevent the growth of microorganisms in the water system. When water is not used, the disinfectant in the water dissipates over time. Without chlorinated water flowing through the pipes for an extended period, microorganisms can grow in water pipes, fixtures and tanks. Some of these may cause disease if they are consumed or inhaled as droplets (particularly while showering).

In order to assist school divisions with their restart of their water systems, VDOE in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water (VDH-ODW)

has developed a guide document titled “Overview of the Water System Restart for Public Schools in Virginia.” This document, linked below as Attachment A, provides a quick reference list of measures that school divisions can use to make sure that the water system in each school building is clean and safe for use as schools reopen for in-person instruction.

### For more information

For additional information, please contact the [Virginia Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water](#) or Vijay Ramnarain, Director, Office of Support Services, at [Vijay.Ramnarain@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Vijay.Ramnarain@doe.virginia.gov) or (804) 225-2037.

JFL/VR/aam

- A. Attachment: [Overview of the Water System Restart for Public Schools in Virginia](#)  
(DOCX)