



## Media Advisory for Immediate Release

March 17, 2025

### Statement on the Lead Crisis Emergency & Rapid Response Alert

To Our Community, MPS, Health Institutions, Health Departments, and City, County & State Elected Officials,

Milwaukee has been in a **lead crisis for decades** that has poisoned our water, homes, soil, and paint, directly endangering the health and future of our children and families. Today, this emergency has **escalated**, with dangerously high lead levels detected in schools across the city, leading to closures. This means our babies, teachers, staff, and the entire community are being exposed to irreversible harm.

The County of Milwaukee declared **racism a public health crisis**—and this lead emergency is yet another example of systemic racial injustice. [Metcalf Park: Inside structural racism's invisible net](#)

### Interconnected Crises: Survival in Milwaukee

Beyond lead, Milwaukee's Black and Brown communities are in a **state of survival** due to **compounding public health crises**, including:

- Clinic closures and inaccessible healthcare
- Exorbitant housing costs and out-of-state slumlords
- Corporate and developer land grabs
- Skyrocketing energy bills, food prices, and food deserts
- Water and tax hikes
- City policies prioritizing "growth" over repair and investment in current residents

The city's rezoning plans push a **false narrative of "growth"** while reinforcing concentrated poverty and **fast-tracking displacement**. Milwaukeeans' health and well-being are not being prioritized.

### Who Is Paying the Price?

The burden of this crisis **falls disproportionately on Black and Brown communities**. Every school impacted so far serves a **majority-Black and Brown student population**, including **Starms Early Childhood**, located just one block outside Metcalf Park. Metcalf Park itself has one of the **highest**

**lead levels in the city**, alongside many neighborhoods in the **15th Aldermanic District**. ([See lead data here](#))

Metcalfe Park is nearly 90 percent Black, with a growing Somali and Hmong population. The **median household income is under \$20,000**—our community cannot afford to handle this crisis alone. Despite historical and ongoing disinvestment, we are resilient and brilliant—but we cannot continue to endure systemic failures alone.

### **We Demand Immediate Action**

Milwaukee must prioritize its residents—our children, families, and educators deserve immediate action from MPS, future school board officials, and city, county, and state leadership.

We demand:

- Lead-free schools
- Lead-free homes
- Lead-free water and soil
- A Milwaukee that prioritizes the health of its people

### **Our Calls to Action**

1. Free, universal lead testing and lead-pipe replacement for all impacted households.
2. Immediate, comprehensive testing and remediation in all MPS schools.
3. Full transparency on lead levels in MPS schools, including public access to test results.
4. Emergency support for families affected by lead poisoning, including:
  - Free therapy and medical support
  - Food vouchers for lead-reducing nutrition
  - State-of-the-art filtration systems for affected homes
5. A city and state budgets that reallocates funds from policing to a dedicated community rapid-response fund for environmental crises.
6. A transparent update on the number of lead laterals replaced in Milwaukee's Black and Brown neighborhoods vs. suburban areas.
7. A racial and employment audit of Milwaukee's lead lateral replacement workforce—who is being hired, trained, and paid to do this critical work?
8. Meet the current and future demands of the parent lead group:

🌐 Instagram (@leadsafeschoolsmke)

### **Community-Led Rapid Response: We Keep Us Safe**

Metcalfe Park Community Bridges refuses to wait for MPS or elected officials to act. In response to this crisis, we are directly distributing water filtration systems to Metcalfe Park families.

- Each high-quality system, valued at \$500, removes lead, bacteria, viruses, mercury, chlorine, pharmaceuticals, VOCs, and more.

- Systems take less than four minutes to install and can connect to refrigerators for clean water access.
- 480 Metcalfe Park families will receive systems through this initiative.

Beginning March 29, our staff and Block Pod members will go door-to-door, signing up community members. System distribution, installation demonstrations, and lead safety education will take place April 7-18. This is just the beginning—we aim to expand to more families.

After families test positive for high lead levels—what's next? This is what a community-led rapid response looks like. Until city, county, and state officials step up, we will take care of our own—because we keep us safe.

**Milwaukee Deserves Better. Metcalfe Park Deserves Better.**

We stand with you, Milwaukee.

**In Solidarity,  
Metcalfe Park Community Bridges**

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To support our rapid response efforts, donate here: [bit.ly/Metcalfedonate](https://bit.ly/Metcalfedonate)