

# LEAD SERVICE LINE FAQ for Consumers



## What are the health effects of lead?

Exposure to lead from sources including drinking water can cause serious health problems. Lead can pass from a pregnant woman to her developing fetus from previous high lead exposure or from exposure during the pregnancy. Lead exposure during pregnancy can put the mother at risk for miscarriage, cause the baby to be born too early or too small, hurt the baby's brain, kidneys, and nervous system, and increase the likelihood of learning or behavioral problems. Infants and children exposed to lead can develop behavior and learning problems, have lower IQ and hyperactivity, slowed growth and development, hearing problems and anemia. Adults exposed to lead can experience cardiovascular effects, increased blood pressure, incidence of hypertension, decreased kidney function, and reproductive problems.

## How does lead get into my drinking water?

Lead is not normally found in drinking water at the source. It typically gets into your drinking water from service lines, plumbing, and fixtures containing lead that can corrode and leach into the water over time. Factors affecting the amount of lead that leaches into the water include: the lead content in pipes, fixtures, solder, water temperature, water pH, and hardness. If consumers live in homes, or communities where lead is in contact with drinking water, they may be at risk of exposure.

## What are service lines?

A service line is a portion of pipe that connects the water main to the building inlet. Ownership of the service line varies by water system (i.e., water utility/provider), but is frequently split between the water system and the property owner. In some instances, the water system or the property owner is the sole owner of the entire service line. Service lines can be made of a variety of materials, such as plastic, copper, galvanized metals, or lead. Under the Lead Service Line Replacement Law (P.L. 2021, C. 183), signed in 2021, a lead service line is a water supply connection that is made of, or lined with, a material consisting of lead, and which connects a water main to a building inlet. A lead pigtail, lead gooseneck, or other lead fitting is also considered to be a lead service line under this law, regardless of the composition of the service line or other portions of piping to which such piece is attached. A galvanized service line will also be considered a lead service line under this law.

## How do I know if I have a lead service line?

Public community water systems in NJ are required to notify residents who are served by a known lead service line by certified mail within thirty [\(30\) days after the submission of the initial service line inventory to the Department](#). If you did not receive a mailing, it is possible you may still have a lead service line, but your water system may not currently be aware of the materials of your service line. If you are a renter, you should ask your landlord if such a notice was sent to them. Additionally, each public community water system is required to make their service line inventory publicly available on their website. Check your local water system's website for their inventory.

If you are not sure, you should contact your water system to inquire about your service line material.

If you want to identify your service line material on your own, the Lead Service Line Collaborative has some steps here: <https://www.lslr-collaborative.org/identifying-service-line-material.html>

### **I did not receive a letter but someone I know (e.g., your neighbor) received a mailing, why is this?**

It may be that your home is not served by a lead service line, or it is possible you may still have a lead service line, but your water system may not currently be aware of the materials of your service line.

If you are not sure of the service line material(s), you should contact your water system to inquire about your service line material.

### **Why did I receive a letter from my water system saying I have a lead service line?**

You received this notice because in July 2021, the Lead Service Line Replacement Law was enacted, requiring all community water systems to replace lead service lines in their service area within 10 years. Under this law, community water systems are required to notify customers, non-paying consumers, and any off-site owner of a property (e.g., landlord) when it is known they are served by a lead service line. Note that the definition of lead service line now includes galvanized service lines. If you have a galvanized service line, you will receive this notice as well.

While lead in drinking water is understood to pose health risks, your water system is required to address lead issues in the drinking water. This includes extensive monitoring and treatment requirements to ensure that water systems provide water which is less likely to corrode lead plumbing.

### **I received a letter saying I have a galvanized service line, what does that mean?**

Galvanized service lines are steel pipes that have been dipped in a protective zinc coating to prevent corrosion and rust. Galvanized piping was commonly installed in homes built before 1960 and was used as an alternative to lead pipes for water supply lines. Galvanized lines that are or were downstream of a lead source such as a lead service line can contribute to lead in drinking water. They also can capture lead from upstream lead sources and release lead if water quality changes or these pipes are disturbed.

Per the Lead Service Line Replacement Law, galvanized service lines are also considered lead service lines for the purposes of identification and replacement. The notices described above are also required to be sent to addresses served by galvanized lines. If you have a galvanized service line in your home, it will need to be replaced just as a lead service line would.

### **What can I do to minimize potential exposure to lead in drinking water?**

If you wish to minimize potential exposure to lead in drinking water, you may consider the following options:

- Flush taps in your home for at least 30 seconds after water has been stagnant for more than six hours. If your home has a long service line, longer flushing times may be necessary.
- Consider purchasing a filter certified by NSF International to remove lead. <https://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/>
- Only use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.
- Test your water for lead. The [DEP DataMiner Tool](#) can be used for assistance in locating a certified laboratory for lead analysis in drinking water.

Your water system is required to replace all lead service lines in their service area by 2031. At some point, you should be notified of when this replacement project will be scheduled. You may elect to replace your service line on your own, however the Department is not currently offering funding directly to homeowners for lead service

line replacement. Contact your water system for more details. If you are planning to replace your lead service line on your own, contact your water system prior to replacement so that you can coordinate your efforts.

### **Does my water system have lead service lines?**

When Governor Phil Murphy signed the Lead Service Line Replacement Law in July 2021, requirements were placed on water systems to submit lead service line inventories to the Department. All public community water systems are required to make their service line inventories publicly available; check your water system's website for more information. Additionally, you can check the Department's webpage for a map of systems that contain lead service lines at [www.nj.gov/dep/lead](http://www.nj.gov/dep/lead).

### **I have a private well, do I need to worry about lead in my drinking water?**

While lead is often recognized as an issue in public water system infrastructure, residents served by private wells may still have exposure to lead in drinking water via lead service lines, plumbing in their homes, or rarely, lead in groundwater. Residences which were built prior to 1988 may be at higher risk, as lead solder, or other components using lead may have been used during construction.

Owners of homes served by private wells should consider testing their water for lead both at the source, as well as at their tap. The [DEP DataMiner Tool](#) can be used for assistance in locating a certified laboratory for lead analysis in drinking water.

[Frequently Asked Questions for Private Wells](#) (NJDOH)

[Lead and Drinking Water from Private Wells](#) (CDC)

### **What is my water system required to post on its Internet website or in a public location?**

Water systems serving greater than 3,300 customers must make their most recent service line inventory available on their website. Water systems serving fewer than 3,300 customers, without an Internet website available, must make their most recent service line inventory available in another publicly accessible location.

Your water system must make its report detailing the water system's progress in replacing lead service lines available on its website no later than December 31, 2022, and annually thereafter. If an Internet website is not available, the water system shall make its report available in another publicly accessible location.

### **How can I reduce my exposure to lead in drinking water?**

In addition to the steps listed above, visit the Department's webpage at [www.nj.gov/dep/lead](http://www.nj.gov/dep/lead), for a full list of steps to take to reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water.

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## **More information:**

[www.nj.gov/dep/lead](http://www.nj.gov/dep/lead)

[LeadInDW@dep.nj.gov](mailto:LeadInDW@dep.nj.gov)

609-292-5550

**NJDEP-Division of Water Supply & Geoscience**

Mail Code 401-04Q

P.O. Box 420

401 East State Street

Trenton, New Jersey 08625