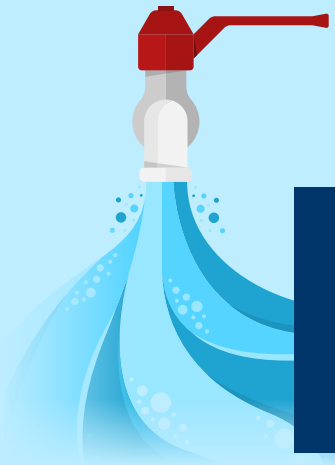


Reading Area Water Authority, Pennsylvania

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
About Lead in Drinking Water

READING AREA WaterAuthority

IS THE READING AREA WATER AUTHORITY'S WATER SAFE?

The water supplied by Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA) is safe. Our water is routinely tested and consistently meets state and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, ensuring optimal quality for our customers. If no lead or other contamination is introduced to the water in your service lines or other water fixtures in your home, your tap water is safe. We are committed to providing you with information because you are a person served by our water system. For more information about your drinking water, visit the lead sections of these websites: EPA: www.epa.gov/lead and RAWA: www.readingareawater.com.

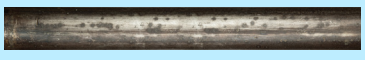
This FAQs document aims to provide residents with resources and information about RAWA's ongoing efforts, including the water service line inventory, lead service line notices, and Lead Service Line Replacement Program (LSLRP).

All information detailed on this document is based on public informational material from EPA and RAWA.

Types of Water Pipes

While RAWA is identifying the pipe material coming into your house (service line), you may very well have a different pipe material(s) throughout your home (premise plumbing). Unfortunately, this program does not provide technical assistance to individual homeowners; however, we recommend following the guidance below or contacting RAWA or a licensed plumber to determine the material of your water pipes. To identify the material of your service pipes on private property, check your household water service connection, typically located in the basement. Homeowners should identify and replace old household pipes, particularly galvanized plumbing and sources of lead. The type of plumbing material you have can vary throughout your household.

Lead: A dull, silver-grey color that is easily scratched with a coin.
Use a magnet - strong magnets will not cling to lead pipes.



Galvanized: A dull, silver-grey color.
Use a magnet - strong magnets will cling to galvanized pipes.

Copper: The color of a copper penny.

Plastic: White, rigid pipe that is joined to water supply piping with a clamp.

PEX: A type of plastic pipe that may be red, white, blue, or black.

WHAT IS LEAD AND WHY IS IT A HEALTH CONCERN?

Lead is a naturally occurring element found in all parts of our environment. It is a toxic, soft metal that can be found in our homes, paint, dust, air, soil, food, and water, and can pose risks to human health. It was previously used for water infrastructure, including pipes and fixtures, before being banned. There is no safe level of exposure to lead in drinking water. The Safe Drinking Water Act requires EPA to determine the level of contaminants in drinking water at which no adverse health effects are likely to occur with an adequate margin of safety. These non-enforceable health goals, based solely on possible health risks, are called maximum contaminant level goals (MCLGs). EPA has set the MCLG for lead in drinking water at zero because lead is a toxic metal that can be harmful to human health even at low exposure levels. Lead is persistent, and it can bioaccumulate in the body over time.

Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or further affect existing learning and behavior issues. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney, or nervous system problems.

HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO DRINKING WATER?

Lead is not present in the treated water or source water supplied to your home from your water system. However, lead can enter your drinking water from the service line (pipe) that connects your home to the distribution line (water main) or from pipes and faucets in your home. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead and galvanized pipes, faucets, and fixtures.

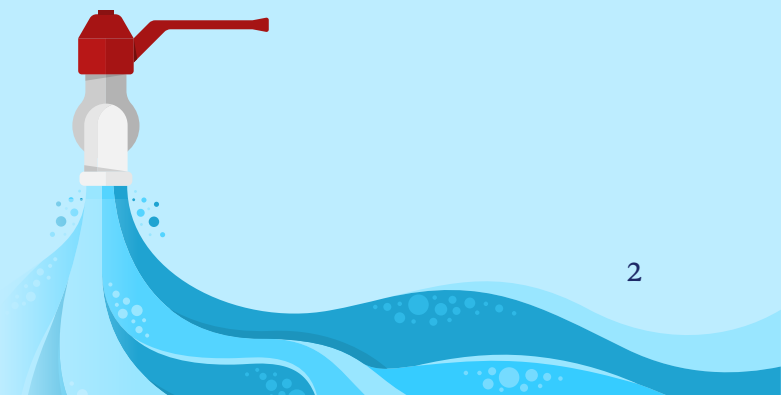
In homes served by lead services lines, these pipes are typically the most significant source of lead in the water. Lead can attach to the inner surface of galvanized service lines and be released into drinking water over time. Service lines made of galvanized iron or steel that are (or were previously) downstream of lead service lines are classified as galvanized requiring replacement (GRR).

Lead pipes are more likely to be found in older cities and homes built before 1986 due to the state ban on lead plumbing that year. In homes without lead service lines, the most common sources of lead in tap water are copper pipes with lead solder (banned in 1998) and lead-containing brass faucets (containing up to 8% lead until 2014). Identifying and ultimately removing lead and GRR service lines is an important way to protect public health.

IS WATER THE ONLY SOURCE OF LEAD IN HOUSES AND BUILDINGS?

No. While water may be a source of exposure to lead in houses and buildings, lead-based paint, dust, contaminated soil, lead-glazed pottery, and some toys and jewelry may also contain lead. Lead-based paint and lead-containing toys pose a significant health risk, especially for young children.

For more information on protecting your family from lead in your home, please visit: www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-sources-lead



MINIMIZING LEAD EXPOSURE

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY EXPOSURE TO LEAD FROM MY TAP WATER?

Below are recommended actions that you may take, separately or in combination, if you are concerned about lead in your drinking water. The list is not intended to be a complete list or to imply that all actions equally reduce the presence of lead in drinking water.

USE YOUR FILTER PROPERLY

- If you use a filter, make sure that it is certified by a third-party certifier to remove lead. Check the filter and cartridge packaging for these certifications.
- Read the directions to learn how to properly install and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead.
- Do not run hot water through the filter.
- For more information visit: Consumer Tool for Identifying Point-of-Use and Pitcher Filters Certified to Reduce Lead in Drinking Water | US EPA

USE COLD WATER

- Only use cold water for cooking, drinking, and making baby formula. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold water.
- Remove and clean your aerator regularly and replace it annually or as needed.
- The small round piece on the bottom of your faucet is the aerator. Your aerator can accumulate lead particles which can contaminate your water so it should be cleaned regularly.

RUN YOUR WATER

- The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, and the length of the lead service line. Residents should contact contact RAWA for recommendations about flushing times in our community.

LEARN ABOUT CONSTRUCTION IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Be aware of any construction or maintenance work, such as street repairs, that could disturb your lead service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line.

HAVE YOUR WATER TESTED

- Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health at https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/water/bureau-of-safe-drinking-water/public-drinking-water/public-notification/lead-in-drinking-water.html to learn about lead and how to have your water tested.

WORK WITH WITH RAWA TO IDENTIFY AND/OR ASSIST IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND REMOVAL OF LEAD AND GRR SERVICE LINES

Your water system is taking action to reduce potential risk by verifying the material of the water service line inside your home to complete the EPA required water service line inventory. Visit RAWA's website at www.readingareawater.com, or contact our information office for questions or assistance verifying your water service line material.

GET YOUR CHILD TESTED TO DETERMINE THE LEAD LEVELS IN THEIR BLOOD.

- Your healthcare provider and your public health agency can provide information about how you can have your child's blood tested for lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that public health actions be initiated when the level of lead in a child's blood is 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) or more. For more information on lead in drinking water, contact your local health department or RAWA for guidance. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead, or call the National Lead Information Center at **1-800-424-LEAD.**

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY HOME HAS A LEAD SERVICE LINE, GRR SERVICE LINE, OR LEAD PLUMBING?

1. You can contact contact RAWA at **(610) 406-6300** and we may be able to provide you with information about whether you have a lead or GRR service line.
2. A licensed plumber may be able to assess your faucets, fixtures, and service line for lead.
3. EPA has developed an online step-by-step guide, Protect Your Tap, to help people identify lead pipes in their homes. The online tool is located at www.epa.gov/pyt.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM CONCERNED ABOUT MY FAMILY'S EXPOSURE TO LEAD? SHOULD WE GET TESTED?

A blood test is the only way to find out whether you or a family member already has lead poisoning. Call your doctor or local health department to arrange for a blood test. You can protect your family every day by:

- Regularly cleaning floors, windowsills, and other surfaces.
- Washing children's hands, bottles, pacifiers, and toys often.
- Making sure children eat a healthy, nutritious diet consistent with the USDA's dietary guidelines.
- Wiping off or removing shoes before entering the house.
- Using an EPA-certified firm for renovations, or if you are doing the renovation yourself, using lead-safe work practices. View more information here: www.epa.gov/lead.

DO I HAVE TO GET A FILTER IF I DON'T HAVE ONE?

The need for a home treatment device is a customer decision. Using a filter can reduce lead in drinking water. If you use a filter, make sure you use a filter certified to remove lead. Read the directions to learn how to properly install and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead. Do not run hot water through the filter.

If you choose to purchase a home filter, EPA offers information on identifying drinking water filters here: Consumer Tool for Identifying Point-of-Use and Pitcher Filters Certified to Reduce Lead in Drinking Water | US EPA. Also, certifying agencies NSF International and Water Quality Association (WQA) have additional resources. NSF International created a Consumer Guide to NSF Certified Lead Filtration Devices for Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water (www.nsf.org/info/leadfiltrationguide). WQA has Lead in Drinking

Water Frequently Asked Questions and a look-up for WQA Certified Products. Always consult the device manufacturer for information on treatment device maintenance and potential impacts to your drinking water or household plumbing.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD?

You can find out more information about lead by visiting the lead sections of this website: EPA: https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water. To learn more information about lead not specific to lead in drinking water, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lead information pages at Lead in the Workplace | CDC and About Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention | Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention | CDC.

LEAD SERVICE LINE NOTICES AND NEXT STEPS

WHY DID I RECEIVE A NOTICE FROM MY WATER SYSTEM SAYING I HAVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE?

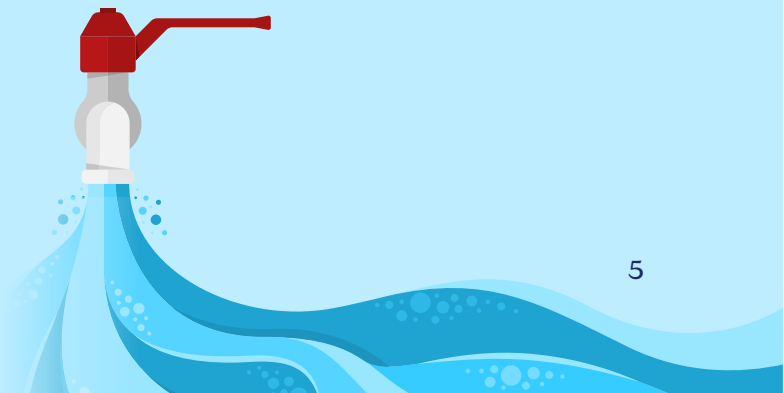
You received this notice because RAWA is completing notifications of service line materials in accordance with EPA's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR). Under the LCRR, water systems are required to notify persons served by lead, GRR, and lead-status unknown service lines.

I DID NOT RECEIVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE NOTICE BUT SOMEONE I KNOW (E.G., MY NEIGHBOR) RECEIVED ONE. WHY IS THIS?

Homes that were found to be served by a non-lead water service line did not receive a notification, and no action is needed. If you are aware that your service line is lead or galvanized and did not receive a notice, please contact RAWA at **(610) 406-6300.**

I RECEIVED A LETTER SAYING I HAVE A GRR 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. Per EPA's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, a GRR service line is a galvanized service line that is (or was at any time) downstream of a lead service line or is downstream of a Lead Status Unknown service line. The notices described above are also required to be sent to addresses served by GRR lines. If you have a GRR service line in your home, it will need to be replaced just as a lead service line would.



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 1991 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.

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (PA DEP) Private Water System Program offers investigation of contamination for private well users and can assist in locating a certified laboratory for lead analysis in drinking water. For more information, visit: https://www.pa.gov/agencies/health/programs/environmental-health/well-water.html

CAN I CONTINUE TO USE MY WATER IF I HAVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE?

Yes. Even though your service line is identified as being made of lead, you can still use water as you normally do. Your water continues to meet water quality standards. We treat our water to prevent corrosion of service lines and household plumbing which helps prevent lead from entering your drinking water, and our ongoing lead and copper compliance testing continues to meet state and federal water quality regulations, including those set for lead. We also recommend that you flush your water tap before drinking and use a water filter. Visit Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water | US EPA for more information.

NOW THAT I'VE RECEIVED A NOTICE, WHAT IS RAWA DOING? WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE INVENTORY IS DONE?

Upon water service line inventory completion, RAWA is implementing a Lead Service Line Replacement Program (LSLRP) to further identify unknown service line materials and replace lead identified service lines in our community.

RAWA's Initial Steps:
RAWA's first step was to collect data on water service line materials serving each home in RAWA's service area through historical records and visual inspections to complete the federally required inventory. Customers will have access to inventory information once it is complete.

Inventory and LSLRP Next Steps: The LSLRP will create a 1) prioritized schedule to replace lead service lines and 2) funding strategy to pay for service line replacement. RAWA intends to apply for significant state and federal funding to pay for private LSLR.

Even though your service line is identified to be made of lead, you can still use water as you normally do. Your water continues to meet water quality standards and RAWA is working to identify and replace all lead and GRR service lines.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR PIPE REPLACEMENT?

RAWA intends to complete all LSLRs by the end of 2037.

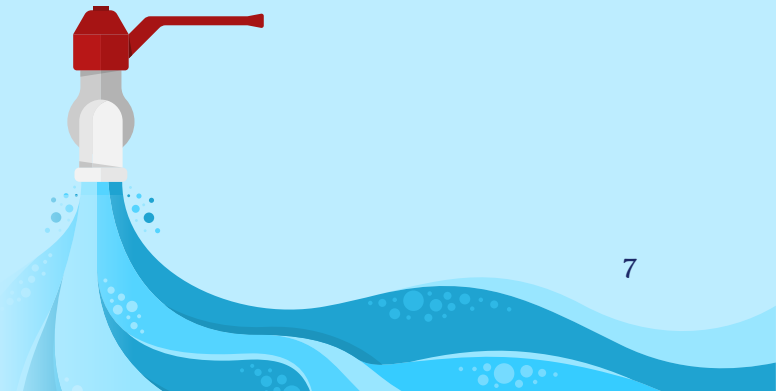
WHY DOES SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT TAKE SO LONG?

In essence, while LSLR is crucial for public health, it is a meticulous process that demands careful planning, coordination with stakeholders, compliance with regulations, and adequate resources to ensure safe and effective outcomes. Below are some key factors involved in LSLR that impact the timeline.

Key Factors

- **Scope of Work:** Replacing lead pipes involves identifying and replacing service lines not only on public property but also on private property.
- **Resource Allocation:** Prioritizing areas with the highest risk and coordinating schedules with property owners.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Compliance with regulatory requirements and obtaining necessary permits and approvals can impact the timeline.
- **Engineering and Planning:** Water systems are unique in design and require detailed assessment and planning to ensure the replacement is done correctly.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging with customers through outreach initiatives is essential to the success of the LSLRP.

For questions, concerns, or more information regarding your community, contact RAWA at (610) 406-6300 or visit www.readingareawater.com.



GENERAL GLO-SPECIFIC FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT SERVICES IS EPA'S GLO INITIATIVE PROVIDING RAWA?

LSL Inventories. An LSL Inventory is necessary to fully identify the funding needs of the community. EPA will:

- Assist with developing spreadsheets and/or maps on where all lead, galvanized, unknown, and non-lead service lines in the utility's service area are located.
- Ensure inventory format meets the 2021 Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) requirements, as well as any applicable state requirements/formats, guided by the EPA Guidance for Developing and Maintaining a Service Line Inventory and any applicable state guidelines.
- Work with states to ensure that these inventories reflect recommended best practices tailored to the needs of individual systems, especially in terms of obtaining state revolving fund (SRF) funding for LSLR.
- May employ field materials evaluation methods to identify unknown service line materials.

Community Engagement Plans. EPA will:

- Provide educational resources if lead is found about what to do during LSLR.
- Meaningfully engage affected customers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and community members while identifying and replacing LSLs.

Lead Service Line Replacement Plans: EPA will help the community develop a Lead Service Line Replacement Plan which includes 100% identification and full replacement of all LSLs (public and private portions). The Lead Service Line Replacement Plan must include:

- A description of a strategy to identify the material of all unknown service lines in the inventory.
- A standard operating procedure for conducting full service line replacement (e.g., techniques to replace service lines, plans for procurement of materials, or plans for utilizing contractors).
- A communication strategy to inform consumers and customers before a full or partial lead or GRR service line replacement.
- A procedure for consumers and customers to flush service lines and premise plumbing of particulate lead to remove debris caused by disturbance of a lead, GRR, or unknown service line following full or partial replacement of a lead or GRR service line.
- A funding strategy for conducting service line replacement.
- A communication strategy to inform residential and non-residential customers and consumers (e.g., property owners, renters, and tenants) served by the water system about the service line replacement plan and program.
- Identification of any laws, regulations, and water tariff agreements that affect the water system's ability to gain access to conduct full lead and GRR service line replacement, including the citation to the specific laws, regulations, or water tariff agreement provisions.
- A replacement prioritization strategy based on factors including but not limited to known lead and GRR service lines and community-specific factors (e.g., populations disproportionately impacted by lead and populations most sensitive to the effects of lead).

State Revolving Fund (SRF). EPA will help the community develop applications to assist with funding service line replacement. Each recipient of this technical assistance will receive a customized plan to facilitate their work with the state. EPA can also assist with identifying additional well-suited funding sources for the community and provide application support.

WHAT HAPPENS IF GLO FINDS LEAD SERVICE LINES WHEN POTHOLING?

GLO will ensure that the finding is documented and that the utility is notified immediately. Appropriate measures, including immediate mitigation strategies such as filter use, will be recommended. GLO will work with water systems to develop post-dig communication materials including the identified service line material and post-dig flushing information.

WHAT IS GLO'S PROCESS FOR DETERMINING WHICH FIELD VERIFICATION METHOD WILL BE USED?

Methods are selected based on EPA guidance and state guidance, factoring in system needs, cost-effectiveness, and available data.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT METHODS GLO USES TO IDENTIFY SERVICE LINES?

Methods include records review, on-site inspections, photos and data submitted using the online customer self-identification survey, water sample analysis, and excavation techniques (e.g., potholing).