

# Lead Service Line FAQs

## **Q. Why did I receive a letter and what is being done about lead service lines?**

On July 22, 2021, [New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy passed amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act and Municipal and County Utilities Authorities Law](#) that address Community Public Water Systems' obligations for managing lead in drinking water. These bills took effect immediately, with new obligations detailing specific requirements around service line inventories and lead service line replacements.

The Merchantville Pennsauken Water Commission (MPWC) is currently developing a system-wide program to verify pipe material and implement a replacement program for any galvanized or lead pipe discovered in the utility-owned portion of the line.

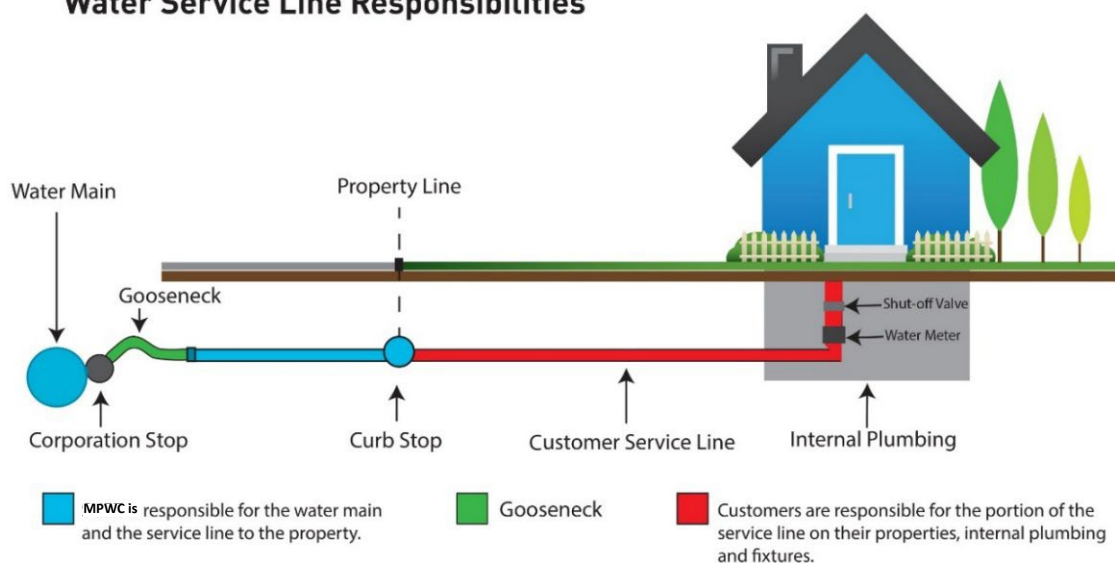
## **Q. When will the verification take place?**

The New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Act amendments require the MPWC, as the owner of a community public water system, to submit to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) a digital inventory of drinking water service line material systemwide by January 22, 2022— which will be made public on the NJDEP's website. The MPWC will then notify each resident, property owner and commercial establishment of the utility-owned portion of a property's service line material—if lead or unknown—by February 22, 2022. Henceforth, the MPWC will submit an updated inventory to NJDEP every July, confirming pipe material across the service area for the utility-owned portion of the service line.

## **Q. What is a Service Line?**

A service line is the pipe that runs from the water main to the customers' home. The utility owns the portion of the service line from the main to the curbstop at the property boundary. The customer owns the portion of the service line from the curbstop into the household plumbing system.

### **Water Service Line Responsibilities**



**Q. What is a Lead Service Line, and how does lead get in my water?**

Lead is not present in the water leaving the water treatment plant and there are no lead water mains (e.g., the large water pipes within the water distribution system). However, decades ago, lead was an industry standard for smaller-diameter, individual water pipes bringing water from the main to your house or indoor plumbing because it was strong, yet malleable enough to bend. If your home was built prior to June 1986, there is a possibility that it contains lead materials—including the service line, solder used in the bonding fixtures and pipes, and bathroom kitchen fixtures.

**Q. What can I do immediately to reduce any chance of exposure to lead in my drinking water?**

- **Flush the water.**  
If the water from the cold-water faucet has not been used for several hours, such as overnight, let it run for 15 to 30 seconds (per NJDEP—when the temperature of the water changes) before using it for drinking, cooking, or preparing beverages.
- **Don't consume water from the hot water faucet.**  
Always use fresh water from the cold-water tap, as hot water releases more lead from Pipes than cold water.
- **Don't boil water excessively.**  
Excessive boiling may increase the concentration of lead in water due to evaporation.
- **Avoid using lead-based cookware.**  
Cookware made outside of this country may contain lead, which will contaminate food during cooking.
- **Water filtration systems.**  
If you purchase a water filtration system, be certain that it is “certified” for lead removal before making the investment. If you choose a water filtration pitcher, ensure it is rated for removing lead.

**Q. Does my property have a lead service line?**

The MPWC is currently developing a system-wide program to verify pipe material and implement a replacement program for any remaining lead or galvanized service lines.

Meanwhile, homeowners may schedule a MPWC technician for verification of pipe material.

Renters should contact property owners to determine the status of lead in their system.

**Q. How can I tell if I have a Lead Service Line?**

Lead service lines are generally a dull gray color and are very soft. A qualified plumber can also determine if your home contains lead-based plumbing fixtures.

**Q. What is currently being done to mitigate the possibility of lead in the MPWC's drinking water?**

Well before New Jersey's July 22, 2021 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act and Municipal and County Utilities Authorities Law that address Community Public Water Systems' obligations for managing lead in drinking water, the MPWC has been proactively taking steps to mitigate the potential for lead in our residents' drinking water. Customers should be advised that MPWC's water system is treated under standards set by [NJDEP Water Quality Parameters](#) to prevent lead and copper from leaching into the drinking water by creating a coating on the inner walls of the pipes. This treatment has been established as a safe and effective strategy for water utilities nationwide, and the MPWC's water utility also does regular Water Quality Parameter and Lead & Copper testing as per the Lead & Copper Rule, to monitor the treatment's effectiveness.

Ultimately, the best way to identify any risk of exposure to lead in drinking water is to have your water tested. Among its resources on drinking water, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers [information about drinking water testing by certified laboratories](#).

**Q. What is the Lead Service Line replacement program?**

A full lead service line replacement (LSLR) involves elimination of all lead pipe between the water main in the street and the water meter in your house. At present, the MPWC is diligently working to define the replacement plan, per amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act and Municipal and County Utilities Authorities Law.

**Q. Why is lead in drinking water dangerous?**

Since lead is easily absorbed into the blood stream and our bodies cannot distinguish lead from other minerals, it is rapidly assimilated by the body when a person drinks water containing lead. The (EPA) Environmental Protection Agency has set the maximum contaminant level goal 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.

Young children, infants, and fetuses are particularly vulnerable to lead because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults. A dose of lead that would have little effect on an adult can have a significant effect on a child. In children, low levels of exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that public health actions be initiated when the level of lead in a child's blood is 5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) or more. This is why such efforts are being made at the federal, state, and municipal level to remove all remaining lead infrastructure from our water systems.

According to the EPA, however, bathing and showering remains safe for you and your children, even if lead is present. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

**Q. What is being done to identify any unknown lead service lines?**

The MPWC is currently developing a plan to verify pipeline material where service lines remain unknown by conducting in-home inspections to determine if it needs to be replaced.

Renters should contact property owners to determine the status of lead in their system.

**Q. How should I prepare for the pipeline testing? Can I stay in my home while the service line is being tested?**

You may stay in the home during our work. Authorized MPWC personnel—wearing identifiable badges, driving marked utility vehicles—will conduct site visits and testing. We would request access to the water meter and tap, so we ask you to move aside furniture, boxes, or anything blocking access to the meter.

**Q. Who will pay for the replacement of the lead service line?**

If property owners wish to replace their service line, they can contact a licensed plumber and do this immediately at their own cost.

Once the MPWC has assessed the need for Lead Service Line replacement system-wide, a specific plan will be developed for MPWC that will include details on covering costs of replacing any lead components found within the water main or the connection joints from the water main to the curb stop at your property's boundary. Any lead present within the system from the meter to the tap will separately be considered the responsibility of the homeowner.

In November 2021, New Jersey [passed additional legislation](#) requiring a property condition disclosure statement to indicate the presence of lead plumbing in residential property. The best way to identify any risk of exposure to lead in drinking water is to have your water tested. Among its resources on drinking water, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers [information about drinking water testing by certified laboratories](#).

**Q. What is the exact timeline for updates on Lead Service Line assessment and replacement?**

The NJDEP will henceforth maintain a current inventory of all public water systems in the State, and all changes in said inventory shall be reported to the Administrator each year. The MPWC will submit an updated, publicly available digital inventory to NJDEP annually on July 22. The MPWC will then have to submit a plan on lead service line replacements to the State of New Jersey by July 22, 2022, and replace all lead services lines in the system by 2031, at a prescribed rate of at least 7% of remaining lines per year. We are currently working diligently with our partners to identify the best way to execute the lead service line replacement program and you will be contacted soon for the next steps.

It remains our goal to continue providing the best water quality at the lowest possible price and to provide the best customer service experience to our customers. Thank you for your support and understanding in this process.

For any further clarification, please contact our contract operator's customer service at 888-434-0518.

For more information on lead, lead service lines and drinking water, visit:

- Introduction to LSLR: <https://www.lslr-collaborative.org/intro-to-lsl-replacement.html>
- CDC Health language on lead: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/faqs/lead-faqs.htm>
- Public Education Requirements: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/leadand\\_copperrule/implementing\\_lead\\_education\\_provisions\\_lcr.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/leadand_copperrule/implementing_lead_education_provisions_lcr.pdf)
  - Section 1, Part 1 details Required Content of Public Education Materials (pg 8).
- NJ FAQ Schools: <https://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/pdf/leadfaq.pdf>
- Nj Lead in Drinking Water Resource Factsheet: <https://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/pdf/lead-resources-factsheet.pdf>

#### VIDEOS:

Lead Service Line Replacement process: <https://vimeo.com/377167976/9a4950780f>

Determining a Lead Service Line: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhUCEeZdUxE&t=3s>