



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – WATER SERVICE LINE MATERIAL INVENTORY

1. What is the Lead and Copper Rule?

In 1991, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water since exposure to lead and copper may cause adverse health effects. This regulation is known as the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR). Since 1991 the LCR has undergone various revisions, most recently in 2021 with the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR), which will take effect in October 2024. For more information, refer to: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-and-copper-rule>.

2. What is a service line?

A service line is a pipe that connects the water main in the street to your household plumbing. In MCWA's service area, there is joint ownership of the water service line. MCWA owns the service line from the water main to the curb stop, near the property line, and customers own the service line from the curb stop to the water meter, usually in the basement.

3. How can I find out the material of my water service line?

Please use these [instructions](#) to identify your service line material at your water meter (generally located in your basement) and submit the results to MCWA using our online form [here](#). If you need further assistance you can call MCWA customer service at 585-442-7200 to schedule an appointment for a technician to complete a material identification of your service line. Our technician will require access to your water meter in order to complete the material determination.

4. What is MCWA doing to identify lead service lines?

Recently, MCWA expanded its Service Line Inventory efforts to enhance our inventory of water service material and identify any remaining lead or galvanized service lines throughout our service area. This includes service line inspections in the field, as well as enlisting the assistance of customers to identify their internal service lines. Customers may see the MCWA and its contractors identifying water service line materials by conducting small excavations in the vicinity of curb boxes, which are typically located near the property or right-of-way line in the front yard. Customers will be notified prior to and following the investigation if any action is required on their part.

Customers can help identify potential lead service lines by using these [instructions](#) to identify your service line material at your water meter (generally located in your basement) and submit the results to MCWA using our online form [here](#).

5. What is lead and why are water service lines made of lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring material used in many residential and industrial products, meaning we may be exposed to it at work or at home. Historically, lead was considered a good material for plumbing because it easily forms into different shapes and resists leaks. Lead pipes were banned in the United States in 1986, and plumbing materials were required to meet federal “lead-free” specifications after this date. Lead may also be found in paint, fixtures such as faucets, interior plumbing solder, and other products, especially in older homes.

6. What does galvanized mean?

Service lines may also be made of galvanized steel. When galvanized steel is located downstream of a section of service line that is constructed of lead, it can collect particulate lead on the interior surface of the pipe and may release that lead into the water later on.

7. How can I test my tap water for lead?

Two state-certified laboratories that offer lead testing are listed below:

ALS Environmental – Rochester	Life Science Laboratories, Inc.
(585) 288-5380	(585) 213-4090
1565 Jefferson Rd.	16 North Main Street
Bldg 300, Suite 360	P.O. Box 424
Rochester, New York 14623	Wayland, New York 14572
Access the ALS website here	Access the Life Science Lab website here

If you have questions about lead testing, please contact our MCWA water quality laboratory staff at Lab@mcwa.com.

8. What happens if lead or galvanized steel is identified?

If a material identification of your water service line is performed, you will receive the results the same day as the investigation. If lead or galvanized steel are identified within your water service line, the MCWA will contact you within 5 business days to discuss next steps. Customers with lead or galvanized service lines may also be asked to participate in our regulatory lead and copper sampling efforts. You can also contact customer service Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for more information at 585-442-7200.

9. What can I do to reduce my exposure to lead if I have a lead or galvanized service and/or if I believe I may have other sources of lead in my household plumbing?

There are a few simple steps you can take to reduce potential risk of lead exposure:

- **Check Your Faucets and Plumbing** - The surest way to reduce exposure to lead in water is to remove and replace any fixtures or plumbing containing lead. Install lead-free faucets and fixtures that have obtained the proper certification. Look for lead-free certification marks, and then replace old faucets and fixtures. Visit nepis.epa.gov and search for lead free certification for more information. Qualified plumbers can tell you for sure if you have any lead plumbing, check for lead solder in your internal pipes, look for fixtures containing lead and provide you the best information about replacement options and costs. Additionally, you can use lead swabs to test your household plumbing for lead including common sources such as leaded solder. Lead swab kits are commonly available in hardware stores.
- **Use Cold Water** - Use cold tap water for drinking and preparing food. Hot water is more likely to contain lead than cold water.
- **Filter** - Filter tap water for drinking and cooking until all sources of lead are removed. This is an especially relevant consideration for pregnant or nursing women and children under age six. Select a filter certified to remove lead. The filter must meet National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) Standard 53 for lead removal. Learn more about filters here: https://info.nsf.org/Certified/dwtu/listings_leadreduction.asp.
- **Daily Flush** - Flush your tap for at least 5 minutes before drinking or cooking if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than 6 hours. However, 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. If you have a known lead service line and your house is set far back from the curb, you may need to flush for longer than 5 minutes. After flushing, use the water for cooking or drinking, or save it for later use by filling pitchers. To conserve water, save the water from flushing the tap for watering plants or doing dishes.
- **Clean Aerators** - Lead and other metals can dissolve in water when it sits in pipes for a few hours. Regularly remove and clean faucet aerators every three months because sediment and lead particles can collect in the screen.

10. Where is lead typically found?

Lead pipes were banned in the United States in 1986, and plumbing materials were required to meet federal “lead-free” specifications after this date. Lead service lines are typically found in homes built before the lead ban. However, lead in service lines and within household plumbing is only one exposure pathway. Lead can also be found in faucets and fittings, paint, ceramic or porcelain fixtures, soil, and stained glass. Lead swab kits are commonly available in hardware stores and can be used to test for these sources.

Sources of lead to consider outside of drinking water include:

- Chipping or peeling paint in homes or buildings built before 1978
- Soil near airports, highways, exterior leaded paint on homes, or factories
- Some imported candies and traditional medicines
- Some imported toys and jewelry

11. What fixtures may contain lead?

Lead can be found in the solder on copper interior plumbing (especially prior to 1986), as well as fixtures such as your kitchen or bathroom sink (especially if they were made before 2014 or imported).

12. Why is copper included in the Lead and Copper Rule regulations?

Copper is included in the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule regulations as it can be a potential contaminant in drinking water. Although copper is an essential nutrient for the body, excessive levels of copper can cause various health effects, such as gastrointestinal issues, liver or kidney damage. Copper can enter drinking water through corrosion of copper pipes, plumbing fittings, and fixtures. The MCWA conducts testing for copper in accordance with regulatory requirements. Since testing was initiated in 1992, we have consistently been substantially below the regulatory copper concentration action level of 1.3 parts per million.

13. Where can I get more information and updates from MCWA?

Please sign up for our customer portal [here](#) and check our website for frequent updates. Additional information will be posted as it becomes available. We will also send updates with your bill.