

## **Lead and Copper Rule Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Does the City of Winter Park have lead in its drinking water?**

Historically, **no lead piping has been found** by city employees throughout the course of installation, replacement, inspections and upgrades to the city's water system.

### **What is lead?**

Lead is a common naturally occurring metallic element that can be found in air, soil and water. It is also a powerful toxin that is harmful to human health. Lead was commonly used in gasoline, paint and plumbing until the 1980s and is still sometimes found in products such as ceramics, batteries, ammunition and cosmetics.

### **Why is the city creating an inventory of lead services lines at this time?**

This inventory is being conducted due to a recent revision to the Lead and Copper Rule established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The updated rule requires all public drinking water utilities to provide an initial water service line inventory by Wednesday, October 16, 2024.

There are over 25,000 service lines in the City of Winter Park's water utility service area. The City of Winter Park Water & Wastewater Utilities Department is currently working to identify if your water service lines (city- and privately-owned) are lead, non-lead or unknown.

### **If my service lines are identified as unknown, what happens?**

As required by the Environmental Protection Agency, properties that have not yet had service lines identified by city staff will be notified by mail in October that their material is unknown. City staff may visit your property to access your meter box in order to determine the material of your water service lines.

### **What happens if my service lines are identified as non-lead?**

There will be no further correspondence sent to properties that have service lines identified as non-lead.

### **What if my service lines are identified as lead?**

If any service lines are identified as lead, you will be notified immediately.

### **Where is lead found in a water distribution system?**

Lead was used for centuries in plumbing because of its pliability and resistance to leaks. In 1986, U.S. Congress amended the Safe Drinking Water Act to prohibit the use of pipes, solder or flux that were not "lead free." At the time "lead free" was defined as solder and flux with no more than 0.2% lead and pipes with no more than 8% lead.

In 2014, the maximum allowable lead content was reduced from not more than 8% to not more than a weighted average of 0.25% of the wetted surface of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings and fixtures.

**Throughout the course of installation, replacement, inspection and upgrades to the city's water system, no lead piping has been found by city employees.**

## **Why is lead a health risk?**

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause immediate adverse health issues at high doses and long-term health issues if it builds up in the body over many years. Pregnant women and young children are particularly vulnerable because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults. Lead can cause brain and kidney damage in addition to effects on the blood and Vitamin D metabolism.

## **How does lead get into drinking water?**

Lead is not naturally occurring in the City of Winter Park's source water, the Floridan Aquifer, and does not come from the city's water treatment plants or distribution system piping. However, in some older homes, lead may be present in the pipe connecting the home to the water system – known as a service line – or within the home's plumbing.

Lead in service pipes, plumbing or fixtures can dissolve, and/or particles can be absorbed into water and end up in tap water. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are brass and bronze faucets and fixtures installed prior to 2003, or lead pipes installed prior to 1989.

## **How do I know whether my drinking water contains lead?**

There are many factors to take into consideration that may be used to determine whether you have lead in your plumbing. Because it is colorless and tasteless, lead is not readily apparent in water. On January 18, 1989, use of plumbing materials and fixtures with lead was banned in Florida.

Therefore, homes built after 1989 do not have lead service lines due to changes in the building code. Additionally, homes that have been replumbed will not contain lead. You may find the year a home was built by accessing the [Orange County Property Appraiser's website](#).

## **How do I know if my home has been replumbed?**

Your plumbing will have been repiped into the attic. If you suspect lead is present in your home's interior plumbing, you may want to hire a certified plumber to inspect your plumbing and any other materials in contact with your drinking water.

## **Who owns the water service line?**

The water utility service lines are owned by the city up to the customer's meter, the rest of the line is owned by the property owner. The city-owned portion of the service line is the city's responsibility to replace, while the private portion is the customer's responsibility to replace. The cost of replacing the customer's portion of the service line and interior plumbing varies. A customer should hire a certified plumber if interested in replacing their service line or replumbing their home.

## **How much lead in water is too much?**

Lead can be harmful even at very low levels and accumulates in our bodies over time. Whenever possible, steps should be taken to reduce or eliminate your household's exposure. While risks vary based on individual circumstances and the amount of water consumed, no concentration of lead is considered "safe." Households with pregnant women, infants or young children are most vulnerable to the harmful effects of lead, even at low levels.

## **What can I do to reduce or eliminate lead from my drinking water?**

The best way to remove risks of lead in water is to completely replace all sources of lead. Below are steps you can take right away to reduce lead levels in your water.

- **Determine whether lead piping is present.** If your home was built after January 18, 1989, your service line material does not contain lead. If your home was built prior to January 18, 1989, you may want to hire a licensed plumber.
- **Run the tap before use.** Lead levels are likely at their highest when water has been sitting in the pipe for several hours. Prior to drinking, you may clear this water from your pipes by running the cold water for several minutes.
- **Clean aerators and hot water heaters.** Aerators are small attachments at the tips of faucets which regulate the flow of water. They can accumulate small particles of lead in their screens. It is a good idea to remove your aerators at least monthly and clean them out. Flush your water heater according to manufacturer's instructions.
- **Use cold water for cooking and drinking.** Always prepare baby formula and cook with cold water. Hot water from your water heater dissolves lead more quickly, resulting in higher levels of lead in water.
- **Filter the water.** Many home water filters are effective at removing lead. If you purchase a filter, make sure it is certified for lead removal and that you maintain it properly.

## **Is it safe to shower in water that contains lead?**

Because lead is not absorbed through the skin, bathing or showering in water containing lead is not considered a health risk.

## **Can my pets drink water with lead?**

Lead can impact animals the same way it does humans. Domestic animals consume a high volume of water relative to their body weight. Pet owners with lead in their home plumbing may want to take precautions such as using filtered water.

## **What about commercial businesses?**

While the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions primarily focus on residences, schools and daycare centers, commercial businesses and business centers with service lines less than two inches are also required to be included in the service line inventory.

## **How does the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions affect schools?**

The revised rule safeguards children from the risk of lead exposure by requiring testing in schools and childcare facilities.