

# Lead Service Lines Frequently Asked Questions

## Is there lead in Troy's water supply and distribution system?

**NO.** Lead is almost never present when water flows from the treatment facility and there are no lead pipes in our distribution system (the water mains running beneath the streets). More information can be found in **our annual water quality reports**.

## How might lead get into my water?

While there is no lead in Troy's water supply and distribution system, older homes (typically those built before the 1940s) may have lead in their water through two sources:

- **Water Service Lines**, comprising the pipe that connects a building to the water system. Ownership of the service line is split between the city and the property owner (see diagram below).
- **Interior Plumbing**, comprising the pipes, fitting, and fixtures inside the building. Interior plumbing is the responsibility of the property owner.

If present, lead in water service lines, interior plumbing, fittings, or fixtures can dissolve, or particles can break off into water and end up at the tap. Elevated lead levels may be present in these homes.

## Are there lead service lines in Troy?

**YES.** Lead was used as water service line material in Troy until the 1940s. Lead service lines were banned nation-wide in 1986. Many times, different materials were used for a single service line. For example, the material used for the public portion of the service line (between the water main and curb stop) may be different than the private portion (between the curb stop and the house).

## What is Troy doing about lead service lines?

- **Water Service Line Inventory.** Troy is developing an inventory of all the service lines in the city. You can help by identifying the material of your water service line and submitting your results to the city at [www.troyny.gov/lead](http://www.troyny.gov/lead). You may also ask DPU to check the material of your water service line by calling 518-237-0343. Whether your service is copper, lead, or something else, we want to hear from you. If you've already submitted your results, thank you!
- **Lead Service Line Replacement Program.** The Department of Public Utilities will be scheduling lead service line replacements beginning spring 2023 in conjunction with annual paving and resurfacing work.
- **Water Quality Testing.** Troy can test a limited amount of water services for the presence of lead at no cost to you. While this service is provided free of charge, the homeowner or tenant must be responsible for ensuring that the proper procedure is followed. If you wish to take advantage of this free testing, please contact our Water Laboratory at (518) 237-0343.
- **Corrosion Control.** To prevent lead from dissolving into water from lead service lines or home plumbing, Troy adjusts the water's chemistry at the treatment plant. This process is known as corrosion control.

## How do I know if my home has a lead service line or lead plumbing?

Troy is combing through its historic records, conducting field investigations, and working with city residents to identify the material of every service line in the city. Please assist our effort by submitting information on your service line

material. Detailed instructions, as well as a form to submit your results, can be found at [www.troyny.gov/lead](http://www.troyny.gov/lead). You may also ask DPU to check your water service line by calling 518-237-0343. Whether your service is copper, lead, or something else, we want to hear from you. If you've already submitted your information, thank you!

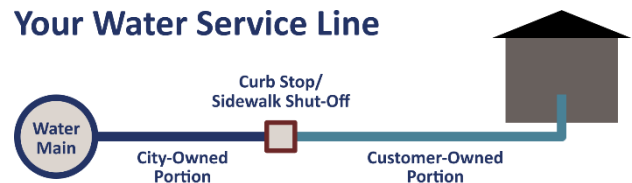
Interior Plumbing is the responsibility of the property owner, not the city. If you believe you may have lead in your interior plumbing, you can hire a certified plumber to inspect the pipes and joints in your house. You may also request a water quality test from the city by calling our Water Laboratory at 518-237-0343.

## Who owns the water service line?

Ownership of the water service line is divided between Troy and the property owner:

- Troy owns the portion of the service line from the water main to the curb stop (sidewalk shut off valve).
- The property owner owns the portion from the curb stop into the house.

### Your Water Service Line



Identifying and replacing lead service line is therefore a shared responsibility between Troy and each customer. This requires a temporary agreement in place to perform work on private property. It also requires that separate funds be used for the work performed on private property as New York State funding cannot be used for work on private property.

## Does Troy plan to replace lead service lines?

**YES.** DPU will be scheduling lead service line replacements beginning spring 2023 in conjunction with annual capital improvement projects such as sidewalk replacements and street paving. During these projects, replacement of both portions of a lead service line is **FREE** for all residents, regardless of income. We strongly encourage property owners to take advantage of this opportunity so that we can replace the entire lead pipe at one time. DPU will contact you if there are any planned projects in your neighborhood.

Troy authorized funding for this program on March 2, 2023, through a 2023 Water Fund Budget and The Capital Projects Fund for the Replacement of Lead Service Lines. This included authority to accept funds from the NYS Department of Health for the replacement of Lead Service Lines.

## What should I do if I replace the customer owned portion of my lead service line?

If no capital improvement projects are planned for your neighborhood, customers may replace their lead service line on a voluntary basis. Troy will pay for replacement of the city owned portion of the lead service line and the property owner will pay for replacement of the customer owned portion.

If you plan to replace your portion of a lead service line, please inform DPU as soon as possible. DPU will make every effort to replace the city owned portion at the same time as the customer owner portion. If you have already replaced your portion of a lead service line within the past six months, DPU will replace the city owned portion within 45 days.

Partial lead service line (PLSL) replacements—where either portion of the service line has been replaced while the other remains lead—should be avoided. Recent studies have shown that partial lead service line replacement may increase short-term lead exposure.

## Will the City of Troy test my drinking water for lead?

**YES.** Because it is colorless and tasteless, lead is not readily apparent in water. In fact, the only way to know for certain whether your drinking water contains lead is to have your water tested by a certified laboratory. Troy can test a limited

amount of water services for the presence of lead at no cost to you. While this service is provided free of charge, the homeowner or tenant must be responsible for ensuring that the proper procedure is followed. If you wish to take advantage of this free testing, please contact our Water Laboratory at (518) 237-0343.

## 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. But there are also steps you can take right away to reduce lead levels in your water.

- **Run the Tap Before Use.** Lead levels are likely at their highest when water has been sitting in the pipe for several hours. Clear this water from your pipes by running the cold water for several minutes. This allows you to draw fresh water from the main. You can use the spent water on house plants or to flush toilets.
- **Clean Aerators.** 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's a good idea to remove your aerators at least monthly and clean them out.
- **Use Cold Water for Cooking and Drinking.** Always cook and prepare baby formula with cold water, because hot water dissolves lead more quickly, resulting in higher levels 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. Find out more on filter certification at [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org).

## What does Troy do to protect my household from lead?

To prevent lead from dissolving into water from lead service lines or home plumbing, Troy adjusts the water's chemistry at the treatment plant. This process is known as corrosion control. We sample water at homes considered to be high risk to ensure our corrosion control remains effective. Although corrosion control can reduce risks, the best way to assure your home is safe from lead exposure through water is to remove the potential sources of lead.

## 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 and paint until the 1970s and is still sometimes found in products such as ceramics, batteries, ammunition, and cosmetics. Lead was used for centuries in plumbing because of its pliability and resistance to leaks; in fact, lead's chemical symbol, Pb, is derived from the Latin word for plumbing.

## Why is lead a health risk?

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause immediate health effects at high doses and long term health effects if it builds up in the body over many years. Lead can cause brain and kidney damage in addition to effects on the blood and vitamin D metabolism.

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. In children, low levels of exposure have been linked to central and peripheral nervous system damage, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells. While people are most commonly exposed to lead through paint, soil and dust, U.S. EPA estimates infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40% to 60% of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

## How much lead in water is too much?

Lead can be harmful even at very low levels and can accumulate in our bodies over time, so wherever 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 at low levels.

## What are the laws regulating lead in drinking water?

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 .2% lead and pipes with no more than 8%. 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.

In 1991, the Environmental Protection Agency published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water. This regulation is known as the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR). Revisions to these rules are scheduled to go into effect October 2024. These regulations require every water system in the country to develop an inventory of water service lines and to develop a lead service line replacement program, among other provisions.