MLGW

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2024

FAQ

WHAT IS A SERVICE LINE?

- Thank you for reaching out to MLGW. We appreciate your questions and we're here to answer them. A service line is a pipe that carries water from MLGW 's water main through a water meter and then to a property.

DOES MLGW HAVE LEAD SERVICE LINES?

- Thank you for your question. MLGW is here to answer all of your questions. Records show that some MLGW service lines have lead and are actively being replaced. MLGW has replaced lead service lines since 2012, even before it was required by the LCRR. According to our inventory, we know we have approximately 1,600 known lead service lines and 183,000 unknown service lines. This is a living document, that will be updated as we replace lead and galvanized service lines. If lead is found during maintenance and repairs, our protocol is to start replacement immediately.

IS MY DRINKING WATER SAFE?

- Yes. We have provided Memphis residents with high-quality, reliable water since 1939. MLGW routinely tests the water for the presence of lead and other contaminants. We conduct more than 38,000 tests each year, and we filter and treat your water to ensure quality and safety. Our water is monitored throughout the year to ensure that it meets the rigorous standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and TDEC.

HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO DRINKING WATER?

- It is important to know that our drinking water does not contain lead when it leaves your water treatment plant. The risk for lead to enter drinking water comes from corrosion of plumbing materials made with lead, usually found in older homes. These household plumbing materials may include some types of brass fixtures, copper piping joined with lead-based solder and lead service lines.
- You can read the EPA's guidance to learn more. City, state and federal regulations, such as the Lead and Copper Rule, protect public health by minimizing lead and copper levels in drinking water.
- Even if you have lead pipes, it does not necessarily mean you have lead in your water! That is because MLGW treats your drinking water with an additive –phosphate– which coats your pipes to protect your water.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD WHEN EXPOSED?

- Learn about lead and the health effects of lead exposure on the EPA's website: https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead and https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water#health

ARE GALVANIZED SERVICE LINES A SOURCE OF LEAD EXPOSURE?

- Our drinking water does not contain lead when it leaves your water treatment plant. Galvanized service lines can pose a risk of lead exposure. The risk of lead entering drinking water comes from corrosion of plumbing materials made with lead.
- Particles can attach to the surface of galvanized pipes and corrode over time, posing a risk of entering drinking water through the plumbing. However, MLGW uses corrosion control treatment to avoid corrosion of plumbing materials, including phosphate.

- The most common sources of lead for water systems are pipes, faucets and plumbing fixtures, particularly inside homes that were constructed before 1950.

WHAT IS THE LEAD AND COPPER RULE?

- In 1991, EPA published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water. This regulation is known as the Lead and Copper Rule (also called the LCR). The rule requires water systems to monitor the lead and copper levels at the tap inside customers' homes and conduct additional actions if elevated levels of lead or copper are found. Since 1991 the LCR has undergone various revisions, the most recent in December 2021. The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements, currently in draft form, add additional requirements for water systems, beginning with the service line inventory due on October 16, 2024.

WHY IS MLGW INVENTORYING WATER SERVICE LINES?

- As part of the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, MLGW must identify and categorize all water service lines.
- MLGW is developing a service line inventory with both customer-owned (private) and utility-owned (public) portions. Service line inventories provide a way for utilities to take action on emerging issues. This inventory will be made available to the public and will help our replacement efforts. Over time, MLGW will continue to update the inventory by verifying information in the field and identifying the material of unknown lines.
- As of now, we know we have approximately 1,600 known lead service lines and 183,000 unknown service lines. MLGW will continue to update the inventory routinely, so these numbers are expected to change as we continue to inspect service lines.

IS MLGW MEETING THE CURRENT LEAD AND COPPER RULE (LCR)?

- Yes. The current Lead and Copper Rule Revisions became law in December 2021. MLGW continues to follow the LCR requirements by 1) Maintaining an effective corrosion control program to minimize pipe corrosion and 2) Proactively working with customers to participate in the sampling at their taps.

HOW CAN I SAMPLE MY WATER?

- MLGW will provide sampling kits upon customer request. You can request a water sampling kit by calling 901-544-6549 or completing the application at MLGW.com/waterservicelines. Your participation is critical to our success.
- Customers should follow the instructions included in their kit to ensure a quality, accurate sample is collected. To return your samples, collect the bottles and place them inside the box, along with any paperwork that came with it to be filled out. Please place the box outside your door and notify MLGW once your sample is ready to be picked up. An MLGW field crew member will come by to pick up the sample within 3-5 days.
- From there, a Water Quality Laboratory professional will analyze the sample and reach out to you about the results of your sample. Once analyzed, if lead is detected at or above the action level in your sample, we will notify you within 24 hours of MLGW receiving the results. If the results are below the action level, MLGW will notify you within 3-5 business days generally from the time MLGW receives the analysis results.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEAD AND GALVANIZED SERVICE LINES?

- MLGW stopped installing lead service lines in 1950, while Shelby County law did not allow lead lines to be installed on the customer side of the meter after 1973. Galvanized service lines were an alternative to lead. Galvanized steel can trap lead particles and release them back into the water over time. As a precaution, MLGW replaces galvanized service lines, in addition to lead

service lines. MLGW also treats its drinking water with an additive called phosphate to prevent pipe corrosion.

HOW DO I CONTACT MLGW ABOUT MY SERVICE LINE MATERIAL?

- MLGW has been actively assessing the material type of service lines within the water system. You can visit our Inventory Service Line Map to review the status of your service line material record at MLGW.com/waterservicelines.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR FIELD INVESTIGATIONS OF WATER SERVICE LINES?

- To help develop our inventory, MLGW will begin inspecting water service lines. MLGW's field crews may visit your property to identify your water service line. You may see our field crews working around your meter box and conducting visual inspections of the pipe on both sides of the meter (public and private), along with the materials used.
- If a lead or galvanized water service line is discovered on your side, MLGW can work with you to find the best replacement option. When replacement occurs, MLGW will provide you with a filter pitcher and up to six months of water filters. For more information on replacement options, please email leadreplacement@mlgw.org.
- Historically, utilities were only required to identify the material for the utility side of the service line. This is why we do not have records for the customer side of the pipe. Homebuilders are responsible for installing pipes on the homeowner's side of the service line, while the utility installs pipes on the utility side of the line.

IF IT IS DETERMINED THAT MY SERVICE LINE NEEDS TO BE REPLACED, HOW MUCH DOES IT COST AND WHO PAYS FOR IT?

- Replacing a water service line costs anywhere from $2,000-$10,000 or more. Factors that can contribute to the total cost include:
    - The distance from the water meter to the entry point of the building.
    - The type of landscaping disturbed during a replacement.
    - The type of material used in the replacement.
- MLGW will continue replacing lead and galvanized service lines from the water main to the water meter.
- MLGW will also work with customers to obtain resources and information to help customers replace their lead or galvanized private service lines.
- Thanks to newly allocated Federal Infrastructure funds, we can replace more lines, including customer-side lines for customers who need help replacing them.
- In 2024 and 2025, we will pilot our program for "full service line replacement," including customer and MLGW side service lines, and develop a program for customers to apply for replacement assistance.
- Dor additional replacement questions,

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT LEAD IN MY DRINKING WATER?

- In addition to actions MLGW is taking to protect you, there are some additional steps you can take to further reduce your risk from consuming water that is served by lead or galvanized pipes.
- Flush your taps by running the water for 15-30 seconds before using.
- Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula.
- Request to have your water tested by MLGW's certified lab.
- Use water filters certified to remove lead.
- Clean your faucet's screen regularly.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF LEAD EXPOSURE AND WHAT IS MLGW DOING TO PREVENT IT?

- Lead exposure is preventable. Currently, MLGW is developing a lead service line inventory to identify areas where lead service lines may exist before evaluating where replacement is needed, while actively replacing known lead service lines in the community.
- MLGW is working with homeowners to help them understand the potential sources of lead in their homes and provide additional resources and information to customers.
- MLGW has also established a pilot program that will occur in 2024 and 2025 for "full service line replacement," including customer and MLGW side service lines, and we are developing a program for customers to apply for replacement assistance.
- While lead exposure is preventable, there are risks associated with exposure, which include the following, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: 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 exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. 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.

WHAT ARE SOME LEAD REDUCTION METHODS FOR SCHOOLS?

- Lead reduction methods in place at a school or childcare facility may include filters and flushing. Tennessee's Department of Health currently works with schools to monitor the potential presence of lead in drinking water.

HOW CAN I ACCESS LEAD REDUCTION RESOURCES?

- Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns or visit our webpage at MLGW.com/waterservicelines to access additional resources. You can also call us at 901-544-6549 or email leadreplacement@mlgw.org

WHAT IS FLUSHING, AS A MEANS OF LEAD REDUCTION?

Flushing is a short-term measure to reduce lead or copper levels in drinking water. The more time water has been sitting in 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. "Flushing" involves opening taps and letting the water run to remove water that has been standing in the interior pipes and/or the outlets. The flushing time can vary by the type of outlet being cleared.

Step-by-step Instructions for Flushing:

1. **Locate faucets –** Locate all faucets that will drain including laundry tubs, hose-bibs, bathtubs, and showers.
2. **Remove screens –** Remove all aerators or screens from all faucets and clean debris with vinegar solution if necessary.
3. **Turn on water - lower –** Turn on cold-water faucets in the basement or lowest floor. Leave all faucets running at the highest rate the drain will allow.
4. **Turn on water - higher –** Turn on cold-water faucets on the next highest floor. Continue until all faucets are running on all floors.
5. **Remember the order –** Record the order in which the faucets were turned on.
6. **Run water at least 15 min –** Leave water running for a minimum of 15 minutes. However, best practices suggest leaving water running for at least 30 minutes.
7. **Turn off water in order –** Turn off the faucets in the same order they were turned on in step 5.
8. **Replace screens –** Reattach cleaned aerators and screens. You may need to replace the aerators or screens if they are too old or worn.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to us by calling us at 901-544-6549 or email leadreplacement@mlgw.org

HOW IS MLGW COMMUNICATING WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND CHILDCARE LEADERSHIP?

- MLGW is actively committed to working with Memphis schools and the Tennessee Department of Health. The Department of Health currently monitors and tests lead levels at childcare facilities.

HOW IS MLGW COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS?

- MLGW is committed to providing accurate, timely, transparent information and communications about lead and our drinking water, as well as the LSL inventory and process.
- MLGW continues to provide results and updates as progress continues regarding water-related lead issues in the community, potentially through media releases, elected official letters and property owner letters.
- We are actively working to replace all lead service lines in our system to ensure that our customers have access to safe and reliable drinking water. The lead service line removal process involves identifying the location of the lead service lines, obtaining necessary permits and approvals, and replacing the lines with new, non-lead pipes.
- We follow federal regulations and standards when replacing lead service lines, and we take steps to minimize any disruptions to our customers. We regularly monitor the quality of our water to ensure that it meets or exceeds all relevant standards, and we use a variety of testing methods to detect any potential contaminants.

HOW IS MLGW COMMUNICATING WITH LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS OR OTHER AUTHORITIES?

- MLGW actively works will local and state health agencies in coordinating lead efforts and drinking water safety, in addition to planning. MLGW ensures that all necessary steps are being taken to address a lead issue and works to keep authorities informed about the situation while remaining federally compliant with the LCRR regulations.