



Fact Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions: **Lead Service Lines and the New Interactive Map**

After the passage of legislation requiring community water systems throughout California to conduct an inventory of user service lines and determine if there are lead pipes or fittings, the State Water Board has been compiling the data and creating the [first interactive map](#), which brings that data to life and makes it accessible to all water customers. The map will be updated periodically as more information is obtained. The following frequently asked questions should help clarify things for those new to the issue.

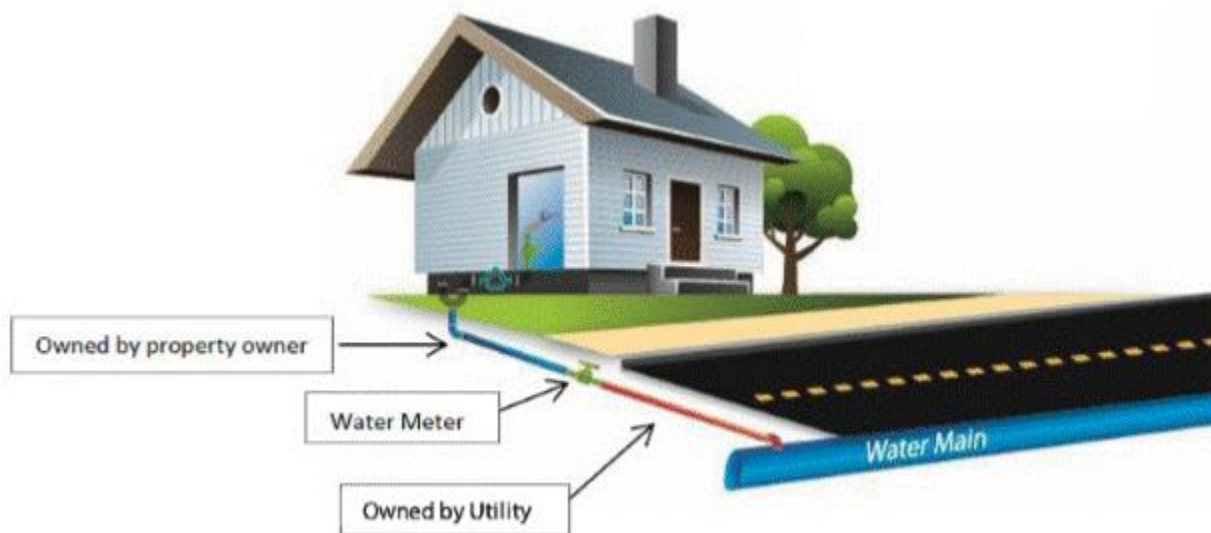
What is a user service line and why has the State Water Board created a map now?

The pipes that carry water from the streets to the water meters at people's homes are known as user service lines. The State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water has been working on a [user-friendly interactive map](#) since the summer of 2018. **Senate Bill 1398** (2016) and **SB427** (2017) updated the California Health and Safety Code to require community water systems to conduct an inventory of partial or total lead service lines by July 1, 2018. The State Water Board decided that the best way to share this data with the public is in the form of an interactive map.

If the new [interactive map](#) shows there are no lead pipes in my neighborhood, can I rest assured there is no lead coming in contact with my drinking water?

We wish we could give you an affirmative, but the accurate answer is "not quite." If you want to be certain, you have to go a little farther. Homeowners/residents are responsible for the pipes from the water meter to the home. Our inventory data stops at the meter, so residents should inspect the pipe at the meter and at the shut-off valve just outside the home to determine if the pipe is lead-free. If the piping on private property is extensive, much of it will be buried in the ground and it would be cost prohibitive to inspect it thoroughly. In those cases, we recommend that you get your water tested. Many water systems will test it for free. If not, the cost of testing for lead is relatively inexpensive from a certified lab. Residents should ask for a lab referral from their community water system. ([Laboratory map](#))





NOTE: “Owned by Utility” and the “Water Meter” is the user service line.

I looked at the map and my area shows the content of the service lines is incomplete or unknown? What’s going on?

There are 3,000 community water systems large and small throughout California. While many were responsive with their inventories, many others were either incomplete, inaccurate, unresponsive – or all of the above. We will continue to strive for complete and accurate data in the months to come. And as we get more data, the map will evolve and be more complete.

The new map shows the presence of lead in the service lines where I live. Should I be concerned?

According to our latest inventory, four community water systems have lead service lines and 31 have lead fittings in some parts of the line. While this is not ideal, the presence of lead does not necessarily mean that any lead has leached into the water. A simple test will indicate if there is lead present in your drinking water. The good news is that state law requires community water systems to present to the State Water Board a timetable for removing and replacing lead service lines. If all goes according to schedule, service lines could be entirely lead-free sometime after the 2020 deadline to submit a plan to replace the lead pipes and fittings.

When were lead pipes used and why?

In the United States, lead became the most commonly used piping material in the late 1800’s and dominated the market until the 1930’s, when steel and copper pipes most often were used when replacing aging water lines. However, during the second world war, it was more common for some homes to have been constructed with lead pipes. If your home was built during this time (late 1930’s to late 1940’s) it may have lead pipe materials.

Since the homeowner/resident is responsible for the pipes from the meter to the dwelling, how can one know if those pipes are lead-free?

Start by clicking on the map below and finding your water system. This will tell if any lead user service lines exist in your service area. If you are concerned about lead pipes or fittings on your side of the meter, contact your water system and ask for assistance. Another option is to hire a plumbing expert (sometimes that's a plumber, sometimes not) to check out your portion of the service line.

Can I get the water in my home tested for the presence of lead? Is it expensive?

Yes, you can have your water tested by a certified lab. We don't encourage testing done using a home kit. The test kits you buy at the store look for lead in the part per million range. Drinking water needs to be tested in the lower part per billion range to make sure it is safe to drink. We urge folks to use a certified lab or enlist the help of the community water system to find a reputable and certified testing lab.

What are the potential health concerns caused by lead in drinking water?

Lead poisoning is most serious in children. The Centers for Disease Control reports that lead exposure can affect nearly every system in the body. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect cognitive abilities, including IQ, the ability to pay attention, and academic achievement. The effects of lead exposure cannot be corrected; therefore, it is important to prevent lead exposure entirely. Questions about health concerns related to blood lead levels should be directed to your local Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program which may be found on the list on the following website: [CDPH](#)

What is the State Water Board doing to address the problem of lead in drinking water?

The State Water Board both requires community water systems to monitor their water systems for lead, and that they identify and remove lead piping from their distribution systems. California's Health and Safety code requires public water systems to test for certain contaminants, including lead and copper, and prohibits the use of pipes, plumbing fixtures, solder or flux that is not "lead free" in the installation or repair of any system that provides water for human consumption. All community water systems must also inventory lead user service lines that are active or expected to become active and/or identify any areas within the distribution system that includes materials that cannot be identified. The community water systems are required to remove identified lead user service lines.

What is the timeline for replacing lead service lines?

Replacement timelines will be different for each community water system. After completing the inventory, the community water system has until July 1, 2020, to provide the State Water Resources Control Board with a timeline to replace the lead user service lines.

(These FAQs were last updated on Feb. 12, 2019)