lead in drinking water – frequently asked questions

How Can Lead Get into My Water?

- Lead can enter drinking water through corrosion of plumbing materials containing lead (e.g. lead service lines, lead solder or brass fixtures in your home.).
- Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder. Lead service lines are typically only present in older homes, but older brass faucets with lead content can be in newer homes.

How Can I Reduce Potential Exposure to Lead

- Before using any tap water for drinking or cooking, flush your water system by running the kitchen tap (or any other tap you take drinking or cooking water from) on COLD for 1–2 minutes.
- Never use hot water from the faucet for drinking or cooking, especially when making baby formula or food for infants.

If my water has high lead levels, is it safe to take a bath or shower?

- Yes. Per the Center for Disease Control, bathing and showering should be safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

What are lead service lines?

- A service line is the pipe that connects your house to the water main in the street. Some service lines that run from older homes (usually those built before 1940) to the utility water main are made from lead.
- There is positive movement in the national approach to eliminating lead risks. The U.S. federal regulation that address lead in drinking water—the Lead and Copper Rule—is currently under revision. The National Drinking Water Advisory Council, which advises the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has recommended that utilities should create plans for removal of all lead service lines within their systems, with a shared responsibility between the utility and their customers. It also advised that utilities should engage in more outreach to customers on lead, including assisting them with testing their water.

How can I tell if I have a lead service line in my home?

- To determine if your home has a lead service line you (or your plumber) need to inspect the service line.
- Lead service lines are generally a dull gray color and are very soft. You can identify them easily by carefully scratching with a key. If the pipe is made of lead, the area you've scratched will turn a bright silver color. Do not use a knife or other sharp instrument and take care not to puncture a hole in the pipe.
- Ownership of the lead service line is typically shared between homeowners and the utility. The homeowner typically owns the section of the pipe that is under the homeowner's property. Replacing these lines require a collaborative effort between customers and our utility. So as communities and as a broader society, we must advance a serious discussion on how we pay to get the lead out.
- If your home has a lead service line, contact SUEZ about working together to get it out.

How to Get Your Home Tap Water Tested for Lead

- The best way to find out if your household tap water contains lead is to get your water tested by a lab that is certified to test household tap water for lead. Certified labs reliably test water at an affordable cost. Mail-in and drop-off options are available. Ask your local health department to recommend a certified lab.

Helpful links for more information (remember — lead is not just a drinking water issue):

EPA Information on Lead: http://www.epa.gov/lead

CDC Information on Lead: http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/leadinwater/

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mysuezwater.com

concerns about what's happening in Flint, MI

Overview

Due to the national health crisis in Flint, MI we understand that our customers may have concerns about lead in their drinking water. Our key messages are:

- Where required, SUEZ completes ***water quality parameter sampling*** to demonstrate that our water has adequate corrosion control.
- In addition we monitor on an annual or tri-annual basis (depending on the system requirements) for lead and copper throughout the distribution systems.
- **The results of both of these monitoring programs** demonstrate that we are in compliance with the federal lead and copper rule.
- Lead and copper analysis results for your specific system can be found in your CCR.

Background Information on Lead in Drinking Water:

Lead does not come from the treatment plants and water mains; it comes from lead service lines running between the water main in the street and the home, and from plumbing inside the home.

Lead can enter drinking water through corrosion of plumbing materials, especially where the water has high acidity or low mineral content that corrodes pipes and fixtures. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder. However, new homes are also at risk: even legally "lead-free" plumbing may contain up to eight percent lead. As of January 2014, changes to the Safe Drinking Water Act reduced the maximum allowable lead content of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings, and fixtures to 0.25 percent. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures with lead solder, from which significant amounts of lead can enter into the water, especially hot water.

Corrosion is a dissolving or wearing away of metal caused by a chemical reaction between water and your plumbing. A number of factors are involved in the extent to which lead enters the water including the chemistry of the water (acidity and alkalinity), the amount of lead it comes into contact with, how long the water stays in the plumbing materials, and the presence of protective scales or coatings inside the plumbing materials.

To address corrosion of lead and copper into drinking water, EPA issued the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) under the authority of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The LCR requires corrosion control treatment to prevent lead and copper from contaminating drinking water. Corrosion control treatment means systems must make drinking water less corrosive to the materials it comes into contact with on its way to customers' faucets.

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. SUEZ is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap on COLD for 1–2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead.

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