



**Important
Information!
Please Read!**

WASA Addresses Issue of Elevated Lead Levels in Water

Dear Customer,

Recently there have been a number of stories about lead in drinking water. People are concerned and want to know more about this important issue. I hope that the information that follows will help you better understand the subject and offer you valuable information that you can apply in your own homes. In writing to you, I want you to know first and foremost that water safety is WASA's top priority. WASA is an organization of people. Most of us, like myself, live in the District of Columbia. Our families are here and we are vitally concerned with taking actions necessary to ensure their safety. We are concerned both professionally and personally about the issue of lead in drinking water and we are taking aggressive action to meet that challenge.

— Jerry N. Johnson
General Manager

Providing safe, clean water to our customers is WASA's highest priority, particularly with regard to our children, who can be especially sensitive to lead exposure. We're working with the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, respected scientists and academic experts to identify the cause of the elevated lead levels in water to some District homes. And, as of this newsletter print date in February, we began undertaking the following:

1. We are testing water in all of DC's public schools, and in private schools upon request. It's believed pipes to the schools are lead-free, but we're taking extra precaution and will share the results when we receive them.
2. We're sending free test kits upon request to all homes with known lead service pipes. In cases where the type of service pipe hasn't been determined, we'll also send a kit.
3. WASA is working with the District's Health Department (DOH), which is conducting free blood tests for people at risk in homes with lead levels exceeding 300 ppb. We are getting counsel and advice from DOH, as well as the George Washington University School of Public Health, to keep us informed of any new information regarding the issue.

4. We're increasing the number of lead service pipes that we'll replace this year by more than 50 percent. When tests of drinking water in District homes showed higher lead levels in 2002, we immediately began compliance with federal rules requiring the replacement of old lead service pipes. It's believed those pipes, typically connecting the city's water mains to single-family homes built before 1950, are the most likely source of the lead showing up in some drinking water. We have replaced about 500 pipes so far.
5. We are reallocating funds approved for other projects to add \$7 million to the Lead Service Line Replacement Program budget to replace service pipes in homes with the highest lead readings, where pregnant women or where children under the age of six live.
6. We have tripled the number of trained customer service representatives manning the lead services hotline. Residents can call **202-787-2732** from 7am to 7pm weekdays and 9am to 5pm weekends. Calls received after hours are returned the next business day. Customers can also email us at WQP2003@dcwasa.com.
7. We are working with the District government to pursue funding assistance for replacing lead service lines on private property. WASA is responsible for replacement of the portion of the pipe under streets and public property. Portions under private property are the responsibility of homeowners, but we can replace these at cost if requested.

The two steps to remember are **1)** when you get up in the morning or anytime water has been sitting unused for six hours or more, flush the old water out of the system by using some water in the home for showering or bathing, and then **2)** run cold water from the tap for one minute before using for drinking or cooking. These simple measures can help reduce lead levels in your water.

How Does Lead Get into Tap Water?

It can enter your home through either a lead service line or through the plumbing within your house from such sources as faucet fixtures, household pipes, or lead solder.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Lead Levels in Your Water

If you are concerned about lead levels in water from your tap, take the following precautions:

1. Use only cold water for cooking and drinking. Drawing hot water from the tap dissolves more lead more quickly than cold water. For hot water, heat cold water.
2. Draw water for drinking or cooking after another high-water-use activity such as bathing or washing your clothes so that service line flushing has occurred.
3. After following step 2, flush your kitchen tap 60 seconds and then collect drinking water in clean containers and store in the refrigerator. The large amount of water used will flush significant amounts of water from your home pipes and service lines.
4. Remove loose debris from faucet strainers regularly by removing the strainers from all taps, and running the water to flush out any accumulation.
5. Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

6. Purchase or lease a home treatment device. Devices should bear the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) seal and should be certified to remove lead.

Please visit www.dcwasa.com for more in-depth tips.

For More Information

- For more information about the impact of lead on your health, please contact the District of Columbia Department of Health at **202-535-2690**.
- To get your family's blood tested, visit your doctor, or contact the DC Department of Health at **202-535-2690**.
- For more information about the Washington, DC water supply, e-mail WQP2003@dcwasa.com or call **202-787-2732**.
- For the Environmental Protection Agency, visit www.epa.gov.
- For information on the Safe Water Drinking Act, visit www.epa.gov/safewater/sdwa/sdwa.html.
- For EPA's Public Notification Information, visit www.epa.gov/safewater/pn.html.
- Please contact WASA to let us help you determine if you have a lead service line. If you do, we will send a free test kit.

Links to the above websites can be found on WASA's Website.

For more information, visit WASA's Website at www.dcwasa.com.
Para leer este folleto en Español, por favor visite nuestra página Web www.dcwasa.com.

Water Emergency? Call 202-612-3400.

Call our **24-Hour Emergency Hotline** to report improper hydrant use, catch basins clogged with leaves, water leaks or suspected sewer backups.



District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority
Customer Service Department
810 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
Customer Service: 202-354-3600
24-Hour Emergencies: 202-612-3400
www.dcwasa.com

