

Lead Service Line Replacement

Frequently Asked Questions

For more information, contact lead@dcwater.com.

For free lead testing, contact leadtest@dcwater.com.

Why replace my lead service pipe?

If you have a lead service pipe, you are at risk of lead exposure. Lead can be released when water comes in contact with pipes that contain lead. If present, elevated lead levels can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead service pipes are replaced with copper pipes.

Who owns the lead service pipe?

A service pipe connects the water main in the street to your household plumbing and is owned in its entirety by the property owner. However, DC Water is responsible for maintaining the portion in public space—the portion of pipe from the water main in the street to the property line. Check our lead map to see any data we have on your service pipe at dcwater.com/leadmap.

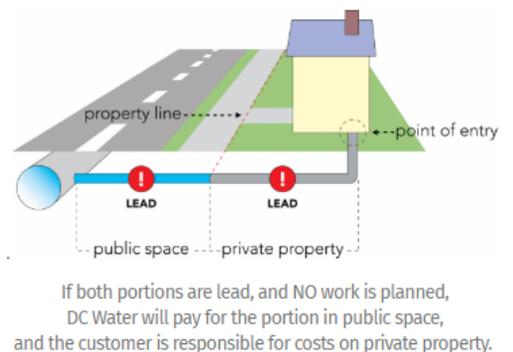
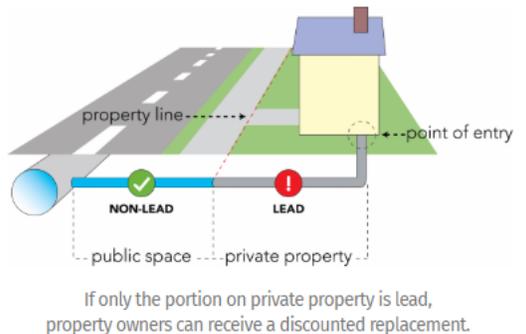
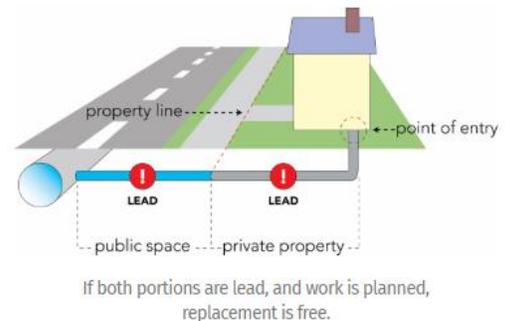
How do I replace my lead service pipe? And what will it cost?

DC Water will always replace the public portion of your lead service pipe at no cost to you. During construction projects, like water main replacements, customers can replace their lead pipes for FREE. District funds will be used to cover 100% of customer costs for replacement.

If no construction is planned, and only the private portion of service pipe is lead (public portion is non-lead), customers can apply for the Lead Service Pipe Replacement Assistance Program. All customers can receive a 50% discount—regardless of income. There also income-based 80% and 100% discounts available.

If no construction is planned, and both sides of the service pipe are lead, customers can enroll in our Voluntary Replacement Program. DC Water will coordinate work if the property owner pays for the portion on private property.

For details about these replacement programs, visit dcwater.com/replacelead or email lead@dcwater.com.



What construction work is required?

If DC Water is only replacing the lead service line in public space, crews will shut the water off to your home for approximately 4-6 hours. Crews will excavate holes approximately 4 ft. by 6 ft. in the street, in the tree space (area between the sidewalk and the curb), and in the yard at the property line. Most work is completed within one day.

How long until my service pipe is replaced?

If your street is undergoing or scheduled for a capital improvement project—like a water main replacement or rehabilitation—service pipe replacement will occur in conjunction with that project.

For the Assistance Program, replacement must occur within 90 days of the application acceptance (details here: dcwater.com/LSR-guidelines). For the Voluntary Replacement Program, replacement can occur up to a year after signing up. For the most part, replacement occurs during spring, summer, and fall.

Will there be digging in my yard?

If you have signed the agreement for DC Water contractors to replace the pipe on the private side, the contractor will minimize digging with a trenchless technology wherever possible that pulls the pipe between the few holes. Also, public space may extend to a portion of the yard in front of your property.

Will the fence, retaining wall, porch or hedges be disturbed during construction? What about trees?

In most cases, these items will not be affected. However, if an older retaining wall near the work area is disturbed, the contractor will repair any damage. DC Water contractors take photographs of the repair area prior to replacement to restore the area properly.

To avoid tree and root damage, contractors will use a special tool to minimize the impact of the replacement. In special circumstances, DC Water will work with the DDOT tree expert/arborist to develop a plan and work around major roots.

When will the roadway, sidewalk, and my yard be restored?

DC Water contractors will restore areas behind the curb within two weeks after pipe replacement (assuming no delays due to weather). For roadway repairs, the contractor will repair excavations made in the street within 60 days. For street repaving, some streets may require more than 60 days, if additional work is scheduled and is dependent on weather conditions. If the block is listed on DDOT's repaving schedule, it may require up to one year before the street is repaved.

Will DC Water's contractors replace grass with sod or seed?

Contractors restore lawns and tree boxes with grass seed. If you have special plants you wish to preserve, please ensure this is discussed with the construction contractor supervisor.

How will DC Water ensure historic brick sidewalks are properly restored?

DC Water requires that, when necessary, the contractor temporarily remove all brick and store it for reuse. When the same bricks are replaced after construction, the color may slightly vary. Occasionally, new brick may be used and will not match exactly.

How does DC Water handle traffic during construction?

DC Water works closely with DDOT to prevent street closure and traffic disruptions during construction. In special circumstances, DDOT may require that the street be temporarily closed and appropriate

signage will be posted to detour traffic. In most cases, there will be restrictions on parking spaces.

What happens after lead service pipe replacement?

After performing a lead service pipe replacement, DC Water protects public health by providing a 6-month supply of water filters, recommending a household flushing schedule, and by providing a free lead test kit 4-6 months after the new pipe is installed. These safeguards surpass any federal requirements for lead service pipe replacements.

How do I remove other lead sources?

Replace old galvanized iron plumbing. In households that have or previously had a lead service pipe, lead can accumulate on the inside of some iron pipes. Install lead-free plumbing fixtures, including faucets, valves and fittings. If replacing service pipes or household plumbing is not a practical option, customers are encouraged to use a water filter certified for lead removal.

I believe I have sources of lead in my home. What should I do until they are removed?

Filter tap water for drinking and cooking until all sources of lead are removed. This is especially important for pregnant or nursing women and children under age six. Select a filter certified to remove lead. The filter must meet National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) Standard 53 for lead removal. Flush the cold water tap when water is not used for several hours before using it for drinking or cooking. Run the tap until you notice a temperature change, then run for an additional two minutes. Lead and other metals can dissolve in water when it sits in pipes for a few hours. Regularly remove and clean faucet aerators every three months, because sediment and lead particles can collect in the screen.