

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Lead & Drinking Water**

### **Where can I find out more about water quality in the City of Manassas?**

- The best place to find detailed information is in the annual water quality report which can be found on our website (<http://www.manassascity.org/documentcenter/view/27831>) or a printed copy can be picked up at City Hall or the Public Works office.

### **Where does the City's water come from and how much lead is in it to begin with?**

- The City draws water from Lake Manassas and the water quality is monitored very frequently. Our testing indicates that our source and finished water has no detectable lead.

### **What causes lead to contaminate drinking water?**

- Lead gets into drinking water when corrosive water is in contact with lead in household plumbing.
- Lead can be in brass faucets, lead solder on copper pipes, lead pipes, or lead service lines which connect the water main to the building plumbing.
- Lead pipes are no longer used for service lines or in household plumbing. Lead solder was banned in 1986. Use of lead in plumbing fixtures like faucets and valves was [limited to <0.25% in 2014](#).

### **How often does the City of Manassas test for water for lead?**

- The City of Manassas has tested regularly in accordance with the EPA's (Environmental Protection Agency) Lead and Copper Rule which was established in 1991. Since the results from our distribution system testing in 2012 were well below the EPA action level, the EPA and VDH (Virginia Department of Health) have allowed us to operate on a reduced monitoring level of every three years. Testing was performed in August 2015 and our next round of testing will be in August 2018. Monitoring will continue at our treatment plant on a regular basis.

### **Where does the City of Manassas test for lead?**

- The City of Manassas samples in private homes within our community which were selected to represent the diversity of construction in accordance with the EPA lead and copper rule guidelines.

### **How does the City of Manassas reduce the risk of lead getting into our drinking water?**

- Controlling corrosion in the drinking water system minimizes the risk of lead getting into the water. The City of Manassas practices corrosion control by:
  - Regular water quality monitoring for factors related to corrosion.
  - Consulting with VDH
  - The City of Manassas treats drinking water with a corrosion inhibitor called orthophosphate. Orthophosphate inhibits corrosion by forming a protective coating in pipes. The coating is a barrier between drinking water and lead or other metals in pipes and plumbing, therefore, decreases the risk for lead and other metals being in the drinking water.

### **What is orthophosphate?**

- Orthophosphate is used to limit corrosion and added to treated drinking water at the treatment plant. It is tasteless, odorless, colorless and approved by the EPA for use in drinking water and by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in food.

### **What do you mean by corrosive water?**

- The City of Manassas monitors many aspects of water quality, but related to corrosion we specifically monitor pH, alkalinity, hardness, temperature, and our disinfectant.
- These attributes influence the characteristics of water including how the water interacts with the piping that carries it. The drivers behind these attributes include the source water quality and the treatment process.
- Depending on the combination of these factors, water may react with the materials in a system to dissolve the metals into the water. The addition of orthophosphate limits this potential interaction.

### **What can I do to reduce my risk of lead in drinking water?**

- You can take simple actions to improve your drinking water quality and reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water.
  - Only use cold water to drink, cook, and prepare baby formula. Water from the hot water faucet can dissolve lead in your plumbing.
  - Run the water at the faucet until it is cooler before using it to drink or cook.
  - Clean the aerators (screens) in your faucets and fixtures at least twice a year.
  - Identify any solder, fixtures or plumbing in your home that could contain lead. Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free” and manufactured before 2015 may contribute lead to drinking water.
  - Buy certified lead-free plumbing and fixtures manufactured after 2015. Go to the National Sanitation Foundation website for additional information.

- Flush your water heater annually. Over time, metals, sediment and bacteria can build up in your water heater.
- Test your water if you have concerns. Use a lab certified by the Virginia Department of Health.
- Contact a certified plumber to identify and remove lead solder, plumbing and fixtures in your home.
- Never boil water to remove lead. Boiling concentrates any lead and does not remove lead from water.

### **How can I have the water in my home tested?**

- EPA recommends sending samples to a certified laboratory for analysis.
- You may find local contact information for testing your water for lead by calling EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791.
- A list of certified laboratories may be found on the Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services website at:  
[www.dgs.virginia.gov/DivisionofConsolidatedLaboratoryServices/Services/LaboratoryCertification/tabid/508/Default.aspx](http://www.dgs.virginia.gov/DivisionofConsolidatedLaboratoryServices/Services/LaboratoryCertification/tabid/508/Default.aspx)

### **How else are we exposed to lead?**

- The primary exposure sources are lead paint, and contaminated dust and soil.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that imported pottery, toys and other products are other possible sources.

### **How can I reduce my family's risk of lead exposure?**

- Exposure to lead is a significant health concern, especially for pregnant women and young children and infants.
- Get your child tested. Contact your health care provider or local health department to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned.
- Identify and remove lead hazards in your home. CDC and state lead prevention program: VDH are good places to start.
- Get your home tested if it was built before 1978.
- [Eat a healthy diet](#). Calcium, iron and vitamins A and C help protect growing bodies from absorbing lead.
- Always wash your hands before eating.

- Do not use imported pottery to cook, store or serve food.
- Regularly clean floors, windowsills, and other surfaces to control dust.

**Is the City of Manassas water system regulated?**

- Yes, the City of Manassas' water system is closely regulated by the VDH and the EPA. Both agencies ensure that the water we provide meets federal and state regulatory standards.

**Does the City of Manassas test drinking water for components other than lead?**

- The City of Manassas regularly performs drinking water quality testing throughout the year. Testing is performed to determine the presence of radioactive, biological, inorganic, and organic components.
- All the water quality-testing results can be found online in the annual water quality report which can be found on our website

<http://www.manassascity.org/documentcenter/view/27831>

**What are service lines?**

- A service line is the pipe that connects your house to the water main in the street.
- Service lines are a shared responsibility in the City. The City of Manassas is responsible for the public portion of the service line to your property line to the water main. The property owner is responsible for the service line from the property line to the house.
- Some service lines that run from older homes, usually those built before 1940 may be made from lead.

**How do I know if my portion of a service line is lead?**

- You need to look at the pipe and identify the metal. follow these simple steps:

[http://www.phila.gov/water/wu/Lead%20Information/Checking\\_for\\_Lead\\_Pipes.pdf](http://www.phila.gov/water/wu/Lead%20Information/Checking_for_Lead_Pipes.pdf)

- A plumbing inspection by a certified plumber is another option. Plumbers can also help you replace lead plumbing, solder of fixtures in your home.