

NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS: LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Please read and keep this following information on the potential hazard of lead in drinking water and what can be done to minimize the risk to you. Southwest Regional Water District, in cooperation with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is providing this information as required by federal law.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has placed considerable emphasis on informing the public of the potential problems of lead in drinking water and has mandated that all newly installed plumbing materials must be essentially lead free. Lead can occur at potentially harmful levels in tap water if the plumbing connections and fixtures through which the water travels, including the solders used to join them, contain lead.

The EPA sets drinking water standards and has determined that lead is a health concern at certain levels of exposure. There is currently a standard of 15 parts per billion (ppb). Based on new health information, EPA is likely to lower this standard significantly.

Part of the purpose of this notice is to inform you of the potential adverse health effects of lead. This is being done even though your water may not be in violation of the current standard.

EPA and others are concerned about lead in drinking water. Too much lead in the human body can cause serious damage to the brain, kidneys, nervous system, and red blood cells. The greatest risk, even with short-term exposure, is to young children and pregnant women. Lead levels in your drinking water are likely to be highest:

- if your home or water system has lead pipes,
- if your home has copper pipes with lead solder, and
- if the home is less than five years old, or
- if you have soft or acidic water, or
- if the water sits in the pipe for several hours

To find out what type of plumbing you have is a simple matter. Look at it and perform the following tests and observations: Lead pipe is normally found only in very old homes and building. Lead pipe is gray, relatively soft, and can be scratched easily with a screwdriver or coin, and shines a silvery color. Iron pipe may look like lead pipe, however, it is usually very hard and black in color. Additionally, another method of determining whether the pipe is lead or iron is to simply hit it lightly with a hammer. Lead pipe will tend to dent, where iron pipe will tend to ring. Copper pipe has a characteristic copper color. Upon aging, it can turn greenish blue. Until the mid-1990s, most of the copper pipe which was installed used solder joints which used lead based solder. Older piping may contain compression or flared fittings and this can be easily determined by seeing the nuts and fittings where the pipe is put together.

Copper pipe which has been soldered with lead usually contributes less lead to the water as time passes. This is because the solder gets coated with minerals from the water and then is not exposed to the leaching actions of the water. After being installed for about five years, the lead solder usually contributes negligible amounts of lead to the water.

At the present time, iron, steel, and plastic pipe have not been associated with any health effects from lead, since they contain very small amounts of lead, or essentially none. These materials or piping are assembled without the use of lead solder.

What can you do to reduce the potential problems of consuming water with high lead concentrations? This can be done very simply by following these precautions:

1. If the water has not been used for several hours, flush the cold water pipes before using the water for human consumption. Turn the faucet on and let the water run until it cools down and gets no cooler. If you recently used water from that pipe, such as for a shower, flushing toilets or laundry, this process may take only 5 – 30 seconds. If there has been no recent major water use, this flushing action may take several minutes.
2. Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, or preparing baby formula.
3. If new plumbing is installed, or if repairs are to be made, insist that lead-free materials be used.
4. If you have an old house containing lead pipe and service connections, these should be replaced.

The only way to make sure of the amount of lead in your water is to have the water tested by a state certified laboratory. Contact Southwest Regional Water District or the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for information about testing.

Periodic testing of Southwest Regional Water District has indicated a lead concentration average of less than 5 ppb. The results of these tests indicate that water produced by the District is below the established maximum contaminant level for lead.

If you have any questions concerning this notice, or would like more information concerning lead in drinking water, please contact Southwest Regional Water District at (513) 863-0828, or the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency at the Southwest District Office, (937) 285-6357.

Southwest Regional Water District