

City of Syracuse Water Department

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER Update on Sampling Lead Levels

The City of Syracuse Water Department found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. The exceedance was discovered in the results of the most recent round of routine lead sampling for the New York State Department of Health, received July 2024. The routine lead sampling conducted sampled 104 homes throughout the City with confirmed lead service lines. Of those 104 homes, 27 homes came back above the action level of 15 parts per billion for lead in the taken sample. The lead service lines feeding these homes and lead fittings and/or solder located in the internal plumbing is the source of elevated lead in the sampled drinking water. Homes that tested over the action level have been sent notices of their results along with a request to resample.

Syracuse's water supply is sourced from Skaneateles Lake. The water leaving Skaneateles Lake and traveling through water mains is free of lead. However, lead is sometimes present in pipes connecting older homes to the water system or in fixtures and home plumbing. The Syracuse Water Department is working to eliminate lead water services.

What is an Action Level?

The lead action level is a measure of the effectiveness of the corrosion control treatment in water systems. The action level is not a standard for establishing a safe level of lead in a home. To check if corrosion control is working, EPA requires water systems to test for lead at the tap in homes or buildings that are likely to have elevated levels of lead, including those with lead service lines. We compare sample results from those homes/buildings to NYS and federal action level of 0.015 mg/L (15 ppb). If 10 percent of the samples from these homes have water concentrations that are greater than the action level, then the system must perform actions such as public education, adjusting treatment, and lead service line replacement.

The City of Syracuse Water Department is focused on protecting the health of every household in our community; however, lead from service lines and lead plumbing and fixtures can dissolve or break off into water and end up at the faucet. There are no known sources of lead in the public portion of the drinking water system or reservoirs. We found that lead service lines and lead in the internal plumbing of homes are potential sources of lead in your drinking water. This does not mean that every property that receives drinking water from the City of Syracuse Water Department has lead in the drinking water. It does mean that you should understand how to reduce your exposure to lead through water. Keep in mind that drinking water is not the only potential source of lead exposure, since lead can be found in air, soil, and paint. For more information on all sources of lead, visit <https://www.epa.gov/lead>.

Health Effects of Lead

Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney, or nervous system problems.

Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment and drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The primary source of lead exposure for most children is lead-based paint. Other sources of lead exposure include lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in a number of consumer products, including certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the workplace (jobs that include house painting, plumbing, renovation, construction, auto repair, welding, electronics repair, jewelry or pottery repair) and exposure from certain hobbies (such as stained glass or pottery, fishing, making or shooting firearms and collecting lead or pewter figurines), as lead can be carried on clothing and shoes. Children's hands or their toys can come into contact with lead in paint, dust, and soil. Therefore, washing children's hands and their toys will help reduce the potential for lead exposure from these sources.

Plumbing materials, including pipes, new brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows pipes, fittings, and fixtures with up to 0.25 percent weighted average of lead to be identified as "lead-free."

The source water for the City of Syracuse, Skaneateles Lake, does **not** contain lead. The water mains that deliver water to the residents in the City of Syracuse do **not** contain lead. The homes that were tested for the New York State Department of Health were confirmed to have lead service lines. When water is in contact with lead service lines or plumbing that contains lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have plumbing containing lead.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Exposure to Lead in Your Water

Below are recommended actions that you may take, separately or in combination, if you are concerned about lead in your drinking water. The list also includes where you may find more information and is not intended to be a complete list or to imply that all actions equally reduce lead from drinking water.

- **Use cold water.** Do not use hot water from the tap for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula as lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Boiling water does not remove lead from water.
- **Run your water.** The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, as well as the length and diameter of the service line and the amount of plumbing in your home. Residents may contact us at 315-448-8340 for recommendations about flushing times in their community.
- **Clean your aerator.** Regularly remove and clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator). Sediment, debris, and lead particles can collect in your aerator. If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.
- **Use bottled water or a water filter.** If your home is served by a lead service line, or if lead-containing plumbing materials are found to be in your home, you may consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter.
- **Use your water filter properly.** Using a filter can reduce lead in drinking water. If you use a filter, it should be certified to remove lead. Read any directions provided with the filter to learn how to properly install, maintain, and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead. Do not run hot water through the filter. For more information on facts and advice on home water filtration systems, visit EPA's website

at <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/home-drinking-water-filtration-fact-sheet> and EPA's [Consumer Tool for Identifying Drinking Water Filters Certified to Reduce Lead](#).

- **Learn what your service line material is.** Contact us at 315-448-8340 or wateroperations@syr.gov or contact a licensed plumber to determine if the pipe that connects your home to the water main (called a service line) is made from lead, galvanized, or other materials. [Protect Your Tap: A quick check for lead](#) is the EPA's on-line step by step guide to learn how to find lead pipes in your home.
- **Learn about construction in your neighborhood.** Contact us at 315-448-8340 or wateroperations@syr.gov to find out about any construction or maintenance work that could disturb your service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line if present.
- **Have your water tested.** Contact us at 315-448-8340 or wateroperations@syr.gov to have your water tested and to learn more about the lead levels in your drinking water.

Child Testing to Determine Lead Levels in Their Blood

If you have concerns, a family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide information about the health effects of lead. State, city, or county departments of health can also provide information about how you can have your child's blood tested for lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that public health actions be initiated when the level of lead in a child's blood is 3.5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) or more. For more information and links to CDC's website, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>.

What is Being Done?

The City of Syracuse Water Department currently treats the water with orthophosphate, a food grade additive deemed safe for consumption by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Orthophosphate is also recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an effective additive in water to reduce lead levels by creating a coating inside of lead service lines, creating a barrier between the lead pipes and the water.

Lead levels in tap water samples have remained steady for the last 10 years, with samplings resulting in a 90th percentile at or under the action level of 15 parts per billion. This cycle of sampling is an outlier with the 90th percentile results being 70 parts per billion and at this time there is not a known reason for the level changes. Treatment with orthophosphate has remained steady at the target dose of 1.75 mg/L and will be reevaluated with the New York State Department of Health as well as other solutions.

The City of Syracuse Water Department is currently inventorying all service lines in the water system and will be providing a public facing portal in the coming months where residents will be able to search if they have a lead water service in their home. If your home was built before 1986 and you have concerns of a lead water service line, please visit <http://www.ongov.net/health/env/lead.html>, there is an informative video from the New York State Department of Health on how to identify if your water service line is lead. If you attempt to identify your water service line material and are still having trouble, please contact our department 315-448-8340 for assistance. Projects to replace aging water infrastructure throughout the City have been and will continue to be used as an opportune time to replace lead water service lines.

We also plan to continue taking the following steps:

- We are continuing to perform lead and water quality monitoring of our water system supply.
- We have been actively removing lead service lines as they are encountered in project areas.
- We are currently inventorying all services in the water system and will be providing a public facing portal in the coming months where residents will be able to search for the service line material to their homes.

Call us at 315-448-8340 or visit our website at syr.gov/departments/water. For more information on lead in drinking water, contact the Onondaga County Department of Health Water Supply Division at 315-435-6600 or PHEng@ongov.net, or the New York State Department of Health directly by calling the toll-free number (within New York State) 1-800-458-1158, extension 27650, or out of state at (518) 402-7650, or by email at bpwsp@health.ny.gov. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk from lead in drinking water are available from EPA's website <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by the City of Syracuse Water Department

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