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Customer Q&A

The City of Three Rivers drinking water system is in a continued lead action level exceedance.

What does this mean for me? If you have a known lead service line or unknown service line material, filter your drinking water. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is providing free filters and replacement cartridges at the locations listed in the attached Public Advisory. Even though eligibility requirements apply, please contact us even if you believe you will not qualify!

Does that mean all of the water contains elevated lead levels? No, the elevated lead levels have only been found in some (not all) of the lead service lines. The water wells that provide water to the city of Three Rivers were tested for lead and the results were not detected (means if there is any lead in them the value is so low the test is unable to detect it).

Lead can enter drinking water when in contact with pipes, solder, home/building interior plumbing, fittings and fixtures that contain lead. Homes with lead service lines have an increased risk of having high lead levels in drinking water. The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain.

What is the City doing to address this issue?

- Short term solutions include:
 - Free filters and cartridges for eligible Three Rivers water customers.
 - Free lead and copper testing for homes with "unknown" service line materials according to our records. This offer is currently open to the first 150 residents but will be expanded as needed.
 - In home service line material verification so residents know the material entering the home
- Medium term solutions include:
 - Review of the drinking water chemicals and possibly making a change to reduce the corrosive nature of the water. The new blended chemical will do more to coat the inside of the service line and home plumbing, preventing lead from being released from them.
 - Service line material verification at the shut off valve near the curb (aka curb stop)
 - Service line replacements on an emergency basis
 - Service line replacements with construction projects
- Long term solutions include:
 - Water main and service line replacements on major roadway reconstruction projects

Is there an end date for the exceedance? The first chance to be done with the exceedance would be January 2025 after the July to December 2024 testing if samples are largely under the 15 ppb. Please note the action level is being lowered from 15 ppb to 12 ppb as of January 1, 2025 so we may not be successful in being done with the exceedance until we can put some of our medium-term and long-term solutions into place.

What can I do to help with this process? Actively participate in the lead copper testing program. For lead service lines we test once between January and June, then again between July and December. For unknown service line materials, we test once and work to identify the service line materials. This may include an inspection of the service line where it enters your home.

Does the lead make my water discolored? No, lead is colorless. The discoloration comes from iron and manganese in our drinking water. These are both naturally occurring minerals in the ground in Michigan. When chlorine is added to them it results in yellow, orange, or even brown water. These are not harmful but are aesthetically displeasing.

How did we get to this point? Cities are now required to seek out lead service lines by physically searching for them. Once identified, those are the services we are testing.

Where is the lead service line? The majority of the lead service lines are located between the watermain and the curb shut off. Some are also located between the curb shutoff and the home. Lead can also be present where the line enters your home.

Why haven't we replaced all of the lead service lines in town yet? Step one is confirming where the lead lines are. This is the step we are currently in. Once we have a group confirmed in an area, we will begin coordinated plans to replace the service lines with other construction work. Since before the 1980's, the City has been replacing lead service lines as they are discovered during a water main replacement project.

Where are the new water mains? There is a map located [here](#) on the City's website that shows all new mains since 1980. Mains prior to 1980 may also have non-lead service lines, but we are still completing physical confirmation at those locations. The map will be updated as we learn more about the service line materials.

If I agree to the in-home inspection will I have to replace the lines in my home? No. After the water meter or the first shut-off valve in the home, property owners are not required to replace their interior plumbing, even if lead lines are found inside. We will recommend that those lines are replaced for health and safety, but no requirements will be made.

Why is the City still using lead lines? We estimate the City stopped installing new lead service lines in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The lines installed before that time are still in use in portions of the City and are the lines we are actively targeting and testing.