Preventing lead exposure during LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT by your local water utility

How Does Lead Get Into My Drinking Water?

Water service lines are the pipes and joints (also known as “fittings”) that connect the water main under the street to the plumbing in your home. Service lines that contain lead are called lead service lines. Lead can get into drinking water when a lead service line corrodes, is removed, or is replaced. This fact sheet provides more information and tips to keep your family safe.

Why Is Lead Harmful?

Lead exposure can harm children’s brains, lower IQs, and affect learning and behavior. There is no known safe level of lead in the body and children younger than six years old are at higher risk because their tiny bodies are growing rapidly. Lead poisoning is one of the most common environmental illnesses in California children but it is preventable.

What Should I Expect with the California Lead Service Line Replacement Process?

California water utilities are replacing lead service lines that they own (i.e., that run from the water main to your water meter) over the next ten years. Some communities have already started this work. When lines are replaced, utilities will provide residents with a water filter and instructions to flush their pipes. Water utilities are not responsible for replacing private service lines owned by the homeowner or customers served by private wells. The lead service line replacement (LSLR) process may be changing in California. For the most current information, visit the LSLR web page (tinyurl.com/349yuey6).

What Can I Do Now to Keep My Family Safe?

If you are worried about your child being exposed to lead from water or other sources, ask their doctor for a blood lead test.

Find out if you have lead service lines (only pre-2010 plumbing fixtures have lead). You may have lead service lines if they are grey, appear silvery when easily scratched with a key, and a magnet does not stick to them. You can also contact your local water utility for help.

Consider using a water filter certified to reduce lead and know when it’s time to replace the filter.

Flush pipes that have not been used for more than 6 hours until the water feels very cold. Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and baby formula; for hot water, heat cold tap water. Boiling water does not remove lead.

Review your Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), also known as an annual drinking water quality report, from your water supplier. Your CCR tells you where your water comes from and what’s in it.

If you plan to replace the privately owned portion of lead service lines, work with a licensed plumber and coordinate with your local water utility.

For more information and the latest updates to LSLR, including when and where lines will be replaced, contact information for water utilities, Consumer Confidence Reports, and how to keep your family lead-safe, visit the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch’s Lead Service Line Replacement web page (tinyurl.com/349yuey6).