

## Important Information about LEAD in your Drinking Water

*This material contains important information about your drinking water.  
Please translate it, speak with someone who understands it or ask the contact listed below for a translation.*

### Why am I receiving this brochure?

[insert PWS name] found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings during the [insert monitoring period (OR the actual months of samples)]. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

[town name] sampling results had a 90<sup>th</sup> percentile result of xx.x parts per billion (ppb) which is above the lead Action Level of 15 ppb. US EPA and MassDEP require public water systems that exceed the lead action level to provide this notification to consumers. Lead is a health concern and is commonly found in the environment, most commonly in lead based paint. Lead can also be found in water, though at much lower levels.

### Why are there elevated levels of lead in the drinking water and what is being done to reduce the levels?

- The water provided by MWRA is lead-free when it leaves the reservoir. However, lead can get into tap water through lead service lines, lead solder used in plumbing, and some brass fixtures.
- MWRA and [insert PWS name] are concerned about lead in your drinking water. We have both an extensive testing program and have treated the water to make it less corrosive. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes may still have lead levels above the US EPA and MassDEP Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb).
- To monitor lead levels, [insert PWS name] tests tap water in homes that are most likely to have lead. These homes are usually older homes that may have lead service lines or lead solder, and they must be tested after water has been sitting overnight. The EPA rule requires that 90% of these worst-case samples must have lead levels below the Action Level of 15 ppb.
- Starting in 1996, MWRA began adjusting the pH and buffering capacity of the water to make it less corrosive and has steadily fine-tuned these treatments over time, thereby reducing the leaching of lead into drinking water. Due to this treatment change, lead levels found in sample tests of tap water have dropped around 80 to 90 percent. Because lead levels in home plumbing can vary, individual homes may occasionally have higher test results.

### 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. Common sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint, household dust, soil, and some plumbing materials and fixtures. Lead can also be found in other household items such as pottery, makeup, toys, and even food. Lead paint was outlawed in 1978, but dust from homes that still have lead paint is the most common source of exposure to lead. Therefore, make sure to wash your children's hands and toys often as they can come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead.

When your drinking water leaves the treatment plant and as it travels through the water mains in your neighborhood, lead is rarely a concern. So, how might lead get into the water in your home? Lead can be in pipes that connect some older homes to the water mains. Those pipes are called service lines, and for homes built before 1986, some service lines were made of lead. In the past, lead was also used in some plumbing materials and in the solder used to connect copper pipes within our homes. When lead comes in contact with water, it can dissolve into the water or break off in tiny particles and that's how lead can end up in your home's drinking water.

The corrosion or wearing away of these lead-based materials can add lead to tap water, particularly if water sits for a long time in the pipes before use. Therefore, water that has been sitting in household pipes for several hours, such as in the morning, or after returning from work or school, is more likely to contain lead. If high levels of lead are found in drinking water, water may typically contribute up to 20 percent of a person's exposure to lead. However, infants who consume mostly formula, mixed with lead-containing water, can receive up to 60 percent of their exposure from water.

## Steps You Can Take to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water

Listed below are steps that you can take to reduce your exposure to lead and copper in drinking water:

- **Use only cold, fresh water for drinking, cooking, and food preparation.** Run the cold water tap for at least 1 minute or until after it turns cold to flush out stale water as it may contain higher levels of lead.
- **Use only cold, fresh water for preparing baby formula.** Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula. Lead dissolves more easily into hot water.
- **Do not boil the water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead. Excessive boiling can increase lead levels as lead remains behind when the water boils away.
- **Check whether your home has a lead service line. IF YOU DO, HAVE IT REMOVED.**
  - [if available, Check for your home address on our list of homes with LSLs at [XXXXXX]
  - Please contact us at [insert PWS contact information] for more information about your home's service line, how to have it replaced, or for information about plumbing materials in your home that may contain lead.
  - Use EPA's Protect Your Tap tool to help identify if your service line is lead – [www.epa.gov/pyt](http://www.epa.gov/pyt).
- **Test your water for lead. You cannot see, taste or smell lead in drinking water.** The only way to determine the level of lead in drinking water at your home is to have the water tested by a MassDEP certified laboratory. For information on how to get your water tested call or email the contact listed below or see [www.mass.gov/certified-laboratories](http://www.mass.gov/certified-laboratories) for a list of certified laboratories. The cost to test is usually between \$25 and \$50. Consider having your paint tested also.

- **Contact your health care provider if you any health-related questions or contact your local health department to find out if your child needs to be tested for lead.** A blood lead level test is the only way to know if your child is being exposed to lead. For more information on Massachusetts' childhood lead testing program, contact the Department of Public Health at 1-800-532-9571 or see [www.mass.gov/orgs/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program).

## Other Options Consumers Can Take to Reduce Exposure

- **Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead or lead solder.** Older faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free,” may contribute lead to drinking water. The law previously allowed brass with up to 8 percent lead to be labeled as “lead free.” As of January 2014, faucets and fixtures must meet the new “lead-free” definition of having no more than 0.25 percent lead. If you are concerned about lead in tap water, you should consider replacing older fixtures.
- **Clean your faucet aerators:** You should also clean out your faucet aerators periodically because they can collect lead particles.
- **Consider alternative sources or treatment of water.** If your water contains lead, you may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. If considering a filter carefully read the package or check [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead. Be sure to maintain and replace the filter in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality. If you are considering using bottled water, note that it may cost up to 1,000 times more than tap water. Simply flushing your tap, as described above, is usually a cheaper and effective alternative.

## How Are We Doing?

Our corrosion control treatment had helped reduce lead levels over time, but even though the MWRA regional system has been below the EPA Action Level since 2004, our most recent local [town name] sampling had levels above the Action Level in too many homes. We are working with homeowners who have lead service lines to remove them and providing this information to help you reduce your risk at home.

**Please share this information on lead 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.**

## For More Information

Call us at [*insert PWS phone number*] or [*email address*] or visit our website at [*insert website if applicable*] to find out what else we are doing about lead, such as supplying home testing kits or a lead service line replacement program. We appreciate the on-going cooperation and shared commitment of our customers in reducing lead levels. We strive to provide safe and healthy water for your home. We all play a role in keeping it that way. Together, let's get the lead out.

For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit:

- [**PWS name**] lead service line information [**insert URL or phone number**]

- EPA’s lead website at [www2.epa.gov/lead](http://www2.epa.gov/lead), or call the EPA lead hotline at 1-800-424- 5323
- MassDEP’s website at [www.mass.gov/service-details/is-there-lead-in-my-tap-water](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/is-there-lead-in-my-tap-water)
- Department of Public Health’s website at [www.mass.gov/orgs/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program)

[PWS Name]

[PWS ID#]

[PWS address]

[City/Town, MA Zip Code]

[PWS Phone Number]

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority – logo?

[www.MWRA.com](http://www.MWRA.com)

617-242-5323

Date of mailing or posting: XXXXX